



Mount Calvary Connected March 4, 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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A Message from Pastor Scott

Yesterday, I got my second dose of the Pfizer vaccine. My wife Julia received her second dose of the Moderna vaccine last week. Out in Wisconsin, my mother and my aunt are now fully vaccinated. Over in York, my father-in-law is awaiting his second dose. Up in State College, dear, dear friends named Steve and Lois Lynn are now fully immunized. Out in St. Louis, as I learned by way of this past Sunday's installment of 60 Minutes, people are already receiving the newly approved Johnson and Johnson vaccine. Just about a year after the pandemic turned so much upside down, it is clear that we are entering a new stage of recovery. Were it not Lent, I might respond with a certain Easter word which can start with either "a" or "h." Instead, I'll cheat a bit and write out the meaning of the Easter word in question, which is "Praise the Lord!"

Praising the Lord in the process, later today, I will begin the process of engaging local, medical authorities about how the pandemic's changing landscape might impact our menu of possibilities here at Mount Calvary. I must confess that integrating the best that science has to offer with our Christian mission and ministry is a point of personal pride for me. We've done it from the very start of the pandemic. Sometimes, we've been more cautious than other congregations. There have also been times we've been less cautious than other congregations. For close to a year now we've lived and operated in the middle rather than out on the edges. Strongly believing that the truth and the best way forward are usually found in the middle rather than out on the edges I believe this should be a source of pride for us. Looking back on things, if it was what the middle way required, I'd preach in the rain again as I did on Christmas Eve and I'm confident Pastor Jonathan would again consecrate the Lord's Supper out in front of a drive-in concession stand as he did on both Easter and Mother's Day last year. Again, and again, we've been informed, resourceful, and creative; traveling the middle road they enable together. In my book, "Praise the Lord" is once again in order.

"Praise the Lord" shall also be most appropriate a month from today when we celebrate our Lord's resurrection from the dead. Working through scientists, elected and appointed officials, concerned citizens, donors like Dolly Parton, churches and other organizations, God is once again rolling away the stone of death. It has not taken just three days as it did two thousand years ago, and people are still dying or getting quite ill thanks to the virus, but we're on our way. Praise the Lord! However long it might take, I'm going to celebrate each and every time God rolls deadly and/or destructive and/or divisive stones out of the way. I hope you'll join me in this practice. As we always do, but even more so this year, we're going to have a lot to celebrate this Easter. When Lent comes to an end and the words "he is risen" are spoken, may we connect this gospel to the dawn now on our horizon and shout out the aforementioned Easter word with renewed and revitalized joy and conviction this year!

When it comes to celebrating Easter at Mount Calvary, I am committed to two things. The first is giving every last one of you the opportunity to praise our stone-removing, death-defying Lord as part of a gathered, faith community. The second is to do this safely. To make this happen services will potentially be added this year so that our patented and highly successful approach to socially distanced worship might continue to remain in place. We know how many people the sanctuary can safely and comfortably hold as of now. By the end of the week, we will have determined how much time must be reserved between services to ensure the entire

sanctuary is “fogged” with the cleansing agent we’ve been using since last summer. What we need to know from you, and as soon as you can tell us, is how many of you are planning to attend an Easter service this year and whether it’s going to be on Saturday or Sunday. We also will need to know when you would be most apt to attend services which might need to be added in order to pair demand with safety. As we soon reach out to you about issues of Easter scheduling, please respond as promptly and thoroughly as you can. In fact, if you’re so inclined, reach out to us first so that the number of inquiries we have to initiate might be reduced. When it comes to issues of Easter scheduling, we’ll be prepared to hear from you or to reach out to you as of next week.

Praising the Lord for you,

Pastor Scott

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

The Passion of Christ,
First Four Wednesdays in March at 7 PM
Sequential Viewing and Discussion of the movie “The Passion of the Christ”



Council and Committee Night Meetings March 16, 2021

Property Committee, Social Ministry Committee, and Stewardship and Administration Committee All Meet at 6:30. All are welcome and encouraged to come!
Congregational Council meets at 7:30.

Give Now for Texas Storm Relief

Beginning Feb. 14, a polar vortex descended over the United States. Subfreezing temperatures and heavy snow swept across the country, impacting millions of people. The harsh conditions severely impacted Southern states, such as Texas, which lack the infrastructure to handle the freezing temperatures and record-setting snow and ice. This has led to power, food and water shortages throughout the region. At its peak, 4.5 million homes and businesses in Texas were without power. With bursting pipes and broken water systems, around 10 million Texans are facing water disruptions. As temperatures rise, melting ice and snow is expected to cause more water damage.

If you would like to donate, please put offering in envelope and mark it Texas relief fund. Drop it off in the offering plate or in the church office.

Save the Date - Easter Egg Hunt

We're finalizing plans for an Easter Egg Hunt for children of all ages to be held on **Saturday, March 27th before the 5:30pm** worship service. More specific details will be available next week in the Mt. Calvary Connected email!

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!



As we close in upon Holy Week and Easter, we are again planning to provide our congregation's younger families a special devotional activity kit for Holy Week called "Holy Week in a Box." This kit will have different scripture, prayer, and hands-on activities for Palm Sunday, Maundy Thursday, Good Friday, and Easter Sunday, to help you commemorate and celebrate these important and holy days with your children.

If you received the 2020 "Advent in a Box" in the mail, you're already on the list and don't need to do anything else if you'd like it mailed to you again. BUT, if you'd like to opt out of receiving a Holy Week box, or make arrangements to pick it up in person, OR if you didn't get the Advent Box but would like a Holy Week box for someone you know, contact Pastor Jono or use the form at the link below: <https://rebrand.ly/HolyWeekBox>

Giving Tree

Are those plastic bags tearing on you? Try a cloth bag! Save the planet!

Suggested cloth bag donation \$5.00

There still are masks and a few of the plastic tote bags!

Suggested donation for them are \$3.00

March and April donations will be sent to Backyard Ministries.

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.

Flea Market 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 and Anniversaries for the Week Mar 7- Mar. 13.

Mar. 7 - Kim Barrick, Keli Koop-Williams, Rob Layton, William Wolfe

Mar. 9 - Ashley Kozak, Gabriel Kozak

Mar. 10 - Ruth Rodkey

Mar. 11 - Alexadner Brehm, Joyce Gindlesperger, Melissa Hutzel, Hunter Molchany, Samantha Nash

Mar. 12 - Kimi Carbaugh

Mar. 13 - Mary Miller, Thomas Rohrabaugh, Jr., Monica Rohrabaugh

Mar. 12 - Jim and Mary Huerth (23 years)

About Our Members:

Welcome to our new member of Mount Calvary!

Katie and Malia Decker

Doris Thomas

Robert and Barbara Miltenberger

Robert and Levi Allison

Jason Kylor

I would like to give a special thank you to Pastor Scott and Mark and Debbie Rychak for thier visit during Joe Grosholz viewing. And another special thank you to my brothers and sisters in Christ for all the loving thoughts, prayers and cards during this difficult time.

I truly am blessed to be part of Mount Calvary's family.

Thank you,

Claudia Plows

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

Remember those that prayer has been requested:

Balogh Family, Grosholz Family, Dean, Paul, Catherine Kinzey, Heidi and Florence George, Linda & Dick, Lauren, Mark & Deb Rychak, Jim & Dot Karl, Dolly & Chis Palm, David, Karen, Lauren, Billy, Patti Sliko, Mark & Kayleigh Lucia, Palmer, Maxine Hale.

NEW Support of Mount Calvary

Mount Calvary ended the first month of a new year in the black. A substantial return on our investment account proved to be quite helpful. Spending about \$820 less than budgeted was also helpful. Contributions, particularly those made to the current fund, were a good deal lower than those anticipated by the budget. While concerning, much of the issue appears to be one of timing. As opposed to this January, last January featured a significant, one-time donation that is being spread out over a longer period of time this year. Additionally, during every budget year, increased donations around the major holidays offset lower donations received at other points throughout the year. As of now, the financial message delivered at this year's annual meeting continues to seem appropriate. With the congregation currently worshipping in a variety of ways, we all just need to monitor our giving patterns and make every effort to maintain last year's level of giving, or better yet, the level of giving in place before the pandemic disrupted our normal offering practices.

CONDENSED WORSHIP FOR THE WEEKEND OF SUNDAY, FEBRUARY 28, 2021.

PRAYER OF THE DAY

O God, by the passion of your Son you made an instrument of shameful death into the means of life. Grant us so to glory in the cross of Christ that we may gladly suffer shame and loss for the sake of your Son, 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 17:1-7, 15-16

As with Noah, God makes an everlasting covenant with Abraham and Sarah. God promises this old couple that they will be the ancestors of nations, though they have no child together. God will miraculously bring forth new life from Sarah's womb. The name changes emphasize the firmness of God's promise.

¹When Abram was ninety-nine years old, the LORD appeared to Abram, and said to him, "I am God Almighty; walk before me, and be blameless. ²And I will make my covenant between me and you, and will make you exceedingly numerous." ³Then Abram fell on his face; and God said to him, ⁴"As for me, this is my covenant with you: You shall be the ancestor of a multitude of nations. ⁵No longer shall your name be Abram, but your name shall be Abraham; for I have made you the ancestor of a multitude of nations. ⁶I will make you exceedingly fruitful; and I will make nations of you, and kings shall come from you. ⁷I will establish my covenant between me and you, and your offspring after you throughout their generations, for an everlasting covenant, to be God to you and to your offspring after you."

¹⁵God said to Abraham, "As for Sarai your wife, you shall not call her Sarai, but Sarah shall be her name. ¹⁶I will bless her, and moreover I will give you a son by her. I will bless her, and she shall give rise to nations; kings of peoples shall come from her."

SECOND READING: ROMANS 4:13-25

Paul presents Abraham as the example for how a person comes into a right relationship with God not through works of the law but through faith. Though Abraham and Sarah were far too old for bearing children, Abraham trusted that God would accomplish what God had promised to accomplish.

¹³The promise that he would inherit the world did not come to Abraham or to his descendants through the law but through the righteousness of faith. ¹⁴If it is the adherents of the law who are to be the heirs, faith is null and the promise is void. ¹⁵For the law brings wrath; but where there is no law, neither is there violation.

¹⁶For this reason it depends on faith, in order that the promise may rest on grace and be guaranteed to all his descendants, not only to the adherents of the law but also to those who share the faith of Abraham (for he is the father of all of us, ¹⁷as it is written, "I have made you the father of many nations")—in the presence of the God in whom he believed, who gives life to the dead and calls into existence the things that do not exist.

¹⁸Hoping against hope, he believed that he would become "the father of many nations," according to what was said, "So numerous shall your descendants be." ¹⁹He did not weaken in faith when he considered his own body, which was already as good as dead (for he was about a hundred years old), or when he considered the barrenness of Sarah's womb. ²⁰No distrust made him waver concerning the promise of God, but he grew strong in his faith as he gave glory to God, ²¹being fully convinced that God was able to do what he had promised. ²²Therefore his faith "was reckoned to him as righteousness." ²³Now the words, "it was reckoned to him," were written not for his sake alone, ²⁴but for ours also. It will be reckoned to us who believe in him who raised Jesus our Lord from the dead, ²⁵who was handed over to death for our trespasses and was raised for our justification.

GOSPEL: MARK 8:31-38

After Peter confesses his belief that Jesus is the Messiah, Jesus tells his disciples for the first time what is to come. Peter's response indicates that he does not yet understand the way of the cross that Jesus will travel.

³¹[Jesus] began to teach them that the Son of Man must undergo great suffering, and be rejected by the elders, the chief priests, and the scribes, and be killed, and after three days rise again.³²He said all this quite openly. And Peter took him aside and began to rebuke him. ³³But turning and looking at his disciples, he rebuked Peter and said, "Get behind me, Satan! For you are setting your mind not on divine things but on human things."

³⁴He called the crowd with his disciples, and said to them, "If any want to become my followers, let them deny themselves and take up their cross and follow me. ³⁵For those who want to save their life will lose it, and those who lose their life for my sake, and for the sake of the gospel, will save it. ³⁶For what will it profit them to gain the whole world and forfeit their life? ³⁷Indeed, what can they give in return for their life? ³⁸Those who are ashamed of me and of my words in this adulterous and sinful generation, of them the Son of Man will also be ashamed when he comes in the glory of his Father with the holy angels."

SERMON BY PASTOR JONATHAN

Grace, mercy, and peace to you from God our creator, and the holy spirit who blesses us with steadfast faith. Amen.

Think for a moment, and try to conjure up a memory of a time in your life that most required faith. Maybe it was a single moment, event, or crossroads that necessitated a leap of faith. Or maybe it was a period that required you to keep faith over a stretch of time in the faith of adversity.

Think of that memory. Think of that experience. And hold onto it.

Personally, I'd like to say that I have all sorts of courageous stories of leaps of faith. But I'd be lying if I did. I actually have a vivid memory of a conversation with one of my friends in high school, where I went into great detail laying out an analogy about just how averse I was to taking those sorts of leaps of faith. I likened it to standing on a dock in a river, and wanting to know exactly where my foot would land before I left my place of safety.

Ironically, for as much as I remember the conversation, I have no idea what leap of faith I might have been avoiding at the time.

But today, in our first reading from Genesis we hear the story of Abram and Sarai not just leaping with faith, but carrying it. Carrying their faith in such a way that their story inspired people of faith for generations. Inspired even the Apostle Paul enough that he referenced them in his letter to the Romans as an example of great righteousness through faith.

But in order to really grasp the gravity of their faithfulness, it's probably necessary to consider more of the big picture than what we hear today.

You see, from the very first moment that God spoke to Abram, at the tender young age of 75, God challenged him with a leap of faith, "Go from your country and your kindred and your father's house to the land that I will show you." But along with that challenge, came a promise, God says, "I will make of you a great nation."

Now, for years, Abram and Sarai followed the will of God. Abram built altars to the Lord as they traveled the countryside. And again and again, even as he grew up older, even as they had no legitimate heir, God reassured Abram, "do not be afraid," "look toward heaven and count the stars, so shall your descendants be."

When he's 99 years old, the promise is stated again, which we hear in today's reading. And eventually, in chapter 21, Sarai whose God-given name is now Sarah, gives birth to Isaac. But not before Abraham has to bear witness to the corruption and destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah.

And even when Abraham and Sarah's son Isaac is finally born, God tests Abraham's faith by commanding him to sacrifice the very same son that they had so faithfully waited to see the birth of.

Even though Abraham's story begins with a *leap* of faith, leaving his homeland and everything he knew to follow God, I think it very quickly becomes a story of *steadfast* faith. Of carrying his faith through the ups and downs up life, and allowing that same faith to carry him when he needed it the most.

And I think Abraham shares that in common with Jesus' disciples. For so many of them, that first moment in which they chose to follow him, leaving behind their former lives and everything they knew, that was a leap of faith.

But in today's Gospel, in the words of Jesus, we seem to be hearing that a single, solitary, leap of faith is not enough. He tells them that bad days are ahead, that he will suffer at the hands of the chief priests, the scribes, and the elders. And that in order to truly be his followers, that they will have to deny themselves, that they will have to take up their own crosses and follow him on that path of suffering.

And even though he doesn't quite directly say it, to me, this sounds like a warning, an encouragement that you'll need more than a few moments of courageous faith to get through the days ahead. You'll need to carry your faith with you, to have *steadfast* faith.

It takes faith to deny oneself. It takes great faith to bear a cross in Christ's name. But that's exactly what the disciples did, they carried their faith with them, and allowed it to carry them.

Often, taking a *leap of faith* is more about yourself, about whether or not you can summon the courage necessary to do whatever the thing you're trying to do is. But carrying your faith, having steadfast faith is not so much about you, as much as it is about the thing, or more specifically, the God in whom you place your faith.

Think back to that memory of a moment requiring great faith... Was it really a "leap" of faith? I'd be willing to guess that if you really think about it, you can see the ways that God prepared your faith ahead of time, and helped you to sustain that faith afterward. I'd bet that you actually carried your faith with you.

Maybe I'm a scaredy cat for not being ready to take more leaps of faith, but I'd much rather aspire to have the sort of faith that carried Abraham and Sarah through those late years of their life, trusting that God would fulfill God's promise. I'd rather have the faith that carried the disciples through the suffering of their Lord, that allowed them to set aside their own wants, and needs, and desires, in order to fully serve all God's children.

It takes faith to keep pushing on, to keep serving others, to follow the teachings of a countercultural rabbi like Jesus. But that faith, that steadfast faith is exactly what the Holy Spirit gives to each one of us. It's ours to carry along on the journey toward the cross, with the full knowledge that there will be days where it's not us carrying our faith, but rather our faith carrying us.

Thanks be to God. Amen.

PRAYERS OF INTERCESSION

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

P: Your gift of grace is for all people. Give confident faith to all the baptized, that they may follow you wholeheartedly. Give new believers joy in your promises; give hope and courage to those who suffer for their faith. Hear us, O God.

A: Your mercy is great.

P: All the ends of the earth worship you. From galaxies to microorganisms, preserve your creation. Teach humanity to wonder at your works and to join you in tending to creation's well-being. Hear us, O God.

A: Your mercy is great.

P: You rule over the nations. Raise up advocates for peace and justice within and between nations. Give life where hope seems dead; call into existence new realities we cannot even imagine. (Here specific places of need may be named.) Hear us, O God.

A: Your mercy is great.

P: In Jesus you joined humanity in suffering and death. Reveal to all the depth of your love shown on the cross. Accompany all who suffer in body, mind, and spirit. Restore all who are sick or grieving. Bring vindication for victims of injustice, exploitation, and oppression (especially). Hear us, O God.

A: Your mercy is great.

P: You made Abraham and Sarah the ancestors of a multitude of nations. Bless grandparents, parents, and foster parents, and the children who look to them for care and guidance. Console those who deal with infertility, parents who have entrusted their children to adoption, and children longing to be adopted. Equip ministries and services to families. Hear us, O God.

A: Your mercy is great.

P: We await the day of Christ's coming in glory. Lead us by the example of all the saints whom you have called to take up their cross and follow you, that together we may find our lives in you. Hear us, O God.

A: Your mercy is great.

P: Heavenly Father we turn to you as the Allegheny Synod is preparing for our Assembly in June. Lead us to pray. Open our hearts to hear your voice. Let us know that your will shall be done. Give us the faith to trust in you. Hear us, O God.

A: Your mercy is great.

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

A: Amen.