



Mount Calvary Connected March 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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Allegheny Synod Evangelical Lutheran Church in America

God's work. Our hands.

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Bishop Michael L. Rhyne

March 17, 2021

Dear sisters and brothers of the Allegheny Synod,

May God's grace and peace be with you. We have now lived one full year with COVID-19. March 15, 2020 was our last 'normal' Sunday. That day I was blessed to worship with Trinity Lutheran in Johnstown and that afternoon gather with First Lutheran in Portage to celebrate the installation of Pastor Mark Fisher. We could still shake hands, be closer than six feet, and none of us had masks. The following week our statewide shutdown began. It has been one year-- however, it feels like much more time has passed.

I believe that is because we have carried so many burdens during this pandemic. We were working (and we still continue to work) to take care of our family, our friends, and ourselves when the world seems to be turning upside down. This has been hard. If you are like me, you are ready for all of this to be behind us. We are all ready to be in that place where we have gotten a majority of people vaccinated and we can see each other face to face again, safely.

I want to first thank God and our Lord Jesus that we have been given the strength and courage to make it through thus far. Throughout the pandemic, Jesus continued to lead and guide us even when the church buildings were closed.

Because of Christ, the work of the church has continued on.

In this last year, congregations learned how to be church together even though we were apart. We have learned about livestream and Zoom services. In better weather we took the worship of Jesus into our parking lots and into the streets. Many congregations found ways to make sure that our members who were most vulnerable were being taken care of. We have seen congregations find new ways to reach out to and support the community. The Holy Spirit has shown us, time and again, that God will find a way to see that God's will is done. God does that in and through you. My deep and abiding prayer is that this is a lesson that we can take from this time.

I also thank God that we have seen rates of COVID infection begin to go down since the beginning of February. We have seen vaccines begin to be distributed. I hope you see these as signs that we will get through this.

What is important for us now is to continue listening to and following that recommendations of the CDC and the PA Dept. of Health. Since things are finally looking a little better, the temptation is for us to slacken our adherence to our safety protocols. That is a natural human response. We want this pandemic to be behind us, we want to move on with our lives. **However, if we stop these safety practices before health and science officials tell us it is safe to do so, we could see another spike in infections and the spread of the virus.**

As we begin to gather together more in groups, and we are prayerfully considering when we will resume our worship in person, I cannot overstate how important it is for us to continue the good work that we have been doing. Continue to maintain social distance. Keep wearing your masks when in public. Until we begin to reach the point where 70 – 80% of the population is vaccinated continue to wear masks, use hand sanitizer, and refrain from group singing in worship.

We are going to get through this. We have to hold on for a little bit longer and make sure we are doing our part to prevent any further infection and transmission of this virus.

May God bless you and keep you.

+Bishop Michael Rhyne

A Message from Pastor Johnathan

As we finish out the Lenten season, preparing for Palm Sunday, the Passion of Our Lord, Holy Week, and Easter, I can't help but feel excited. As a child, I didn't understand why we had so many different worship services packed into the week before Easter, but over time I've truly come to appreciate it, and here's why: Holy Week is the closest we can come as modern-day Christians to living out and experiencing the Jesus story in real-time.

Throughout most of scripture, the passage of time isn't always entirely clear. Take for example, the seven day creation story in Genesis; there's always a healthy amount of scholarly debate over the use of the word "day," and whether or not it's accurate to think that they were the same literal 24-hour periods that we call a "day" in modern times. Or, think of all the times that the number 40 is used in conjunction with a unit of time in scripture; the great flood in the story of Noah's Ark began when it rained for 40 days and 40 nights, Elijah walked 40 days and 40 nights to arrive at Mount Horeb, Saul, David and Solomon each ruled for 40 years, Jesus fasted in the wilderness for 40 days, and the Ascension taking place 40 days after the resurrection, just to name a few. Yet again, there's strong evidence to suggest that "40 days" or "40 years" may have been more of a figure of speech rather than a literal passage of time.

And even without confusion over how long things took in various bible stories, we rarely celebrate things in real-time. During the Advent and Christmas season we hear of the annunciation to Mary one week, and Jesus' birth just a few weeks later, and we celebrate the arrival of the wise men just 12 days later on Epiphany even though it may have taken them years to get there.

But Holy Week is different. The narrative regarding the passage of time is more specific, and clearer, and we follow the story as it unfolds. We know that Jesus made his triumphal entry into Jerusalem on the first day of the week. We know that it was likely Wednesday of that week that Judas made his final arrangements to betray Jesus, and that they celebrated "The Last Supper" on Thursday, with Jesus being arrested in Gethsemane later that night. We know that he was crucified, died, and was buried on Friday, and that when the women arrived at the tomb early on the first day of the week, they found it empty. And during Holy Week, we follow along with all of those events as they happen.

In recent years, it has been a powerful devotional practice for me to allow myself to dwell in those particular moments, to pause at various points during the week and try to put myself into the shoes (or sandals) of Jesus, the disciples, and all those others who we hear about in these stories. I imagine the joy they experience on Sunday, the nervousness of Judas on Wednesday, the anger on Thursday, the confusion on Friday. Allowing myself to walk through the story in this way, thinking about how quickly it all moves, has helped me gain a greater appreciation for what it all means for our faith.

So try it out for yourself in this next week and a half as we work our way toward Easter. Take time each day, and imagine yourself part of the unfolding events of Jesus' final days, try to channel the emotions of those who were involved, and make use of our various worship offerings to help get you into that frame of mind. You may find that this Holy Week means more to you than any other before it.

Yours in Christ, Pastor Jono



Holy Week and Easter Services

Maundy Thursday: 7:00 pm in house

Good Friday: 3:00 pm drive in behind the church
7:00 pm in house

Easter Saturday: 5:30 and 7:15 pm in house

Easter Sunday: 7:00, 8:45, and 10:45 am in house
9:30 am drive in behind the church

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

Easter Egg Hunt

Mount Calvary will be hosting an Easter Egg Hunt on Saturday, March 27 at 4:30pm before the evening worship service. All children and youth are invited to participate. Weather permitting, the event will be held outside around the church; or socially-distanced and spread throughout the inside of the building if necessary.

We're currently looking for additional volunteers to help with setup (confirmation students will receive bonus points for volunteering), as well as donations of candy. Contact Pastor Jonathan in the church office on Mondays or Wednesdays or at RevJonoAdams@gmail.com for more information.

Backyard cookie collection will be Thursday, April 1, 2021.

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!



You should have received your Holy Week in a Box. If you haven't and would like one please call the church office (814-266-4859) or contact Pastor Jono or use the form at the link below: <https://rebrand.ly/HolyWeekBox>.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>

Birthdays for the Week Mar 28 – Apr 3.

Mar. 28 - Ruth Marley, Keith Mayket

Mar. 29 - Caren Hill

Mar. 30 - Shannon Dusack, Karen Guinta, Kathy Ling

Mar. 31 - Shelly Saloney

Apr. 1 - Debra Gorzelsky, Kristopher Newman, Alexis Ripper

Apr. 2 - William Smith

Apr. 3 - Donald Bachota, Clair Barker, Henry Cominsky, Joyce Morgenstern

About Our Members:

Peg Felix passed away on Saturday, March 20, 2021

Edith Miller passed away on Sunday, March 21, 2021

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, Patti Sliko, Mark & Kayleigh Lucia, Palmer, Maxine Hale, Sandy, Alex, Dave, Joyce Morgenstern, Kadence, Jack, Denny, Gina, Rick, Catherine Kinzey, Linda & Dick, Buster, Colley Family, Jose and Family, Irene, Midge, Vic, Felix Family, and Miller Family.

Financial Update through February

Mount Calvary went into the red during the month of February. Two factors were largely responsible for this development.

On the expense side, approximately \$1300 was required to repair a water leak and weather-related expenses exceeded expectation, with the difference hopefully resolving itself over time once warmer weather arrives.

On the income side, we continue to reckon with the relocation of one of our largest donors, the varied timing of once-a-year gifts, and the reduced giving caused by the disruption of our normal worship schedule. With much of it already expected, none of this represents an impassable hurdle for us. For our current plan to work, everyone simply needs to repeat their 2020 giving, regardless of the form of worship they are using at present and regardless of how often they choose to worship. Where possible, increases in excess of 2020 giving or a return to generally higher levels of 2019 giving would also be most helpful. If we all do our part, we can very easily overcome a sluggish start to the new year without breaking the bank. Because we live in an aging community where retirees and younger professionals regularly relocate, our giving patterns and histories are always going to require vigilance on our part. It's just part of doing mission in Johnstown; the place we call home.

If it helps, credit card donations can be made through our website at mt-calvarylutheran.org and non-credit card donations can be mailed to our church at 1000 Scalp Avenue, Johnstown, PA 15904.

CONDENSED WORSHIP FOR THE WEEKEND OF SUNDAY, March 21, 2021.

PRAYER OF THE DAY

O God, with steadfast love you draw us to yourself, and in mercy you receive our prayers. Strengthen us to bring forth the fruits of the Spirit, that through life and death we may live in 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: JEREMIAH 31:31-34

The Judeans in Babylon blamed their exile on their ancestors, who had broken the covenant established at Sinai. Here the prophet looks to a day when God will make a new covenant with the people. There will be no need to teach the law, because God will write it on their hearts.

³¹The days are surely coming, says the LORD, when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and the house of Judah. ³²It will not be like the covenant that I made with their ancestors when I took them by the hand to bring them out of the land of Egypt—a covenant that they broke, though I was their husband, says the LORD. ³³But this is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, says the LORD: I will put my law within them, and I will write it on their hearts; and I will be their God, and they shall be my people.

³⁴No longer shall they teach one another, or say to each other, “Know the LORD,” for they shall all know me, from the least of them to the greatest, says the LORD; for I will forgive their iniquity, and remember their sin no more.

SECOND READING: HEBREWS 5:5-10

Using priestly imagery and references to the Old Testament, the author explains how Christ lived in trusting obedience to God, and so God has made Christ the source of our eternal salvation.

⁵Christ did not glorify himself in becoming a high priest, but was appointed by the one who said to him, “You are my Son, today I have begotten you”; ⁶as he says also in another place, “You are a priest forever, according to the order of Melchizedek.”

⁷In the days of his flesh, Jesus offered up prayers and supplications, with loud cries and tears, to the one who was able to save him from death, and he was heard because of his reverent submission. ⁸Although he was a Son, he learned obedience through what he suffered; ⁹and having been made perfect, he became the source of eternal salvation for all who obey him, ¹⁰having been designated by God a high priest according to the order of Melchizedek.

GOSPEL: JOHN 12:20-33

Jesus entered Jerusalem for the last time to celebrate the Passover festival. Here Jesus’ words about seeds planted in the ground turn the disaster of his death into the promise of a harvest in which everyone will be gathered.

²⁰Now among those who went up to worship at the festival were some Greeks. ²¹They came to Philip, who was from Bethsaida in Galilee, and said to him, “Sir, we wish to see Jesus.” ²²Philip went and told Andrew; then Andrew and Philip went and told Jesus. ²³Jesus answered them, “The hour has come for the Son of Man to be glorified. ²⁴Very truly, I tell you, unless a grain of wheat falls into the earth and dies, it remains just a single grain; but if it dies, it bears much fruit. ²⁵Those who love their life lose it, and those who hate their life in this world will keep it for eternal life. ²⁶Whoever serves me must follow me, and where I am, there will my servant be also. Whoever serves me, the Father will honor.

²⁷“Now my soul is troubled. And what should I say—‘Father, save me from this hour’? No, it is for this reason that I have come to this hour. ²⁸Father, glorify your name.” Then a voice came from heaven, “I have glorified it, and I will glorify it again.” ²⁹The crowd standing there heard it and said that it was thunder. Others said, “An angel has spoken to him.” ³⁰Jesus answered, “This voice has come for your sake, not for mine. ³¹Now is the judgment of this world; now the ruler of this world will be driven out. ³²And I, when I am lifted up from the earth, will draw all people to myself.” ³³He said this to indicate the kind of death he was to die.

SERMON BY PASTOR SCOTT

When you're a Jet, you're a Jet all the way, from your first cigarette to your last dying day. When you're a Jet, let them do what they can. You've got brothers around. You're a family man. The Jets are in gear. Our cylinders are clicking. You're home with your own. When company's expected, you're well-protected.

A little over thirty-five years ago I took a break from what was then a pretty busy part-time job at Lauer's Food Market to learn those words. For the most part I still remember them all these years later. Prior to starting to work quite a bit in the summer of my fifteenth year, I had participated in all of my school's plays and musicals. I decided to get back in on the action one final time when my senior year came round. And so, I greatly reduced my hours at work to learn the words I just sang for you. If you didn't recognize them, they come straight out of the Broadway musical "West Side Story" Thanks to our opening song "Somewhere," we've already heard some of the other great music to be found in that production. There's much more of it for those who wish to explore further and it's all fitting for this fifth weekend in Lent.

To refresh your memory, if it needs refreshing, "West Side Story" is a musical about outsiders and insiders. Can people from different straits and with different stories come together and find a good and meaningful place for everybody? Or shall it continue to be the haves and the have nots; the accepted and the unaccepted; the entitled and the unentitled? It's no wonder that such a production was written by two Jews—Leonard Bernstein and Stephen Sondheim. Throughout its history, Israel has often struggled to find a place at the center of society; a place to fit in; a place truly to call home. And of course this has never been Israel's quest alone. It's long been a very human quest. Talk of ugly ducklings and black sheep, talk of America First and Brexit, talk of MeToo and Black Lives Matter, talk of fathers and sons and of the Hatfields and the McCoys—it's all talk which reveals each of us wants a piece of the pie and a slice of the apple and sometimes don't feel as if we get a fair shake. It's no different today than it was close to sixty-fifty years ago when West Side Story was first released. In fact, one could very easily argue that feelings of exclusion are the engine that's driving the bus all over the world today. Maybe our country and others will figure out how to overcome the division and the resentment that run so rampant these days. Then again maybe they won't. What's certain is that Jesus has made a place for all of us.

A couple chapters after today's reading from John Jesus says this quite explicitly. With the Last Supper in full swing and the fourteenth chapter of John's gospel beginning, Jesus says very matter of factly, "In my Father's house there are many rooms and I go to prepare a place for you." It's a prime indication that in the Kingdom of God there shall be a piece of the pie and a slice of the apple for all. And the language of all is certainly prominent in today's collection of biblical readings. Two chapters prior to the verses about Jesus making a place for us all in his Father's house, today's reading from John finds our Lord and Savior saying, "When I am lifted up from the earth, I will draw all people to myself." There it is again. In the Kingdom of God, there shall be a place for all; a piece of the pie and a slice of the apple for all interested parties. And speaking of interested parties, our reading from Hebrews says that Jesus is the source of eternal salvation for all who obey him. There it is yet again. The Kingdom of God isn't like the kingdoms of this world. Everyone hits paydirt. There's more than enough pie and apple to go around. Everyone who aspires to be in, shall be in. In the Kingdom, we'll be able to have our cake and eat it too because there shall be no shortage of cake with which to contend. It all sounds too good to be true. How can we come to lessen the suspicion that the Church has been sold a bill of goods? How can we come to trust more and more that there are green pastures and still waters for all in the Kingdom of God?

"Look to the cross! Look to the cross! Look to the cross," says our reading from John. In today's reading from John we're exposed on multiple occasions to the evangelist's unique description of the cross as the glorification of God. To be sure, the empty tomb is responsible for this language of glorification as well. But let's be clear. For John there shall be no glorification of God without the blood and the suffering and the shame of the cross. The blood, suffering, and shame elevate God over all others who aspire to power and

authority. The blood and the suffering and the shame of the cross glorify God more than any public relations campaign could ever glorify any company or candidate. And it has everything to do with God making a place for us; with God reserving a piece of the pie and a slice of the apple for all.

Think about it by what of negative comparison! If Wall Street has one dollar, who's going to get it—Wall Street or you? The answer is Wall Street. If you're not a fortunate son, who's going to be sent off to war—you or the senator's son? The answer is you. If you're a pauper, who lives in the palace—you or the prince? The answer is the prince. But not God. The cross elevates God high above all other aspirants to power and authority, the cross glorifies all others gods and governments out of business, because the cross finds God leading the charge rather than remaining in the rear. In and through the cross, God doesn't stay above the fray. God gets down and dirty for all, even if it means emptying God's pockets and abandoning every divine privilege, honor, and prerogative we can imagine. How can we heighten the sense, deepen the trust and belief, that there is a place for us all in the Kingdom of God? Look to the cross! Look to the cross! Look to the cross! In and through the cross, God has forever made it clear that our place in the Kingdom of God is more important to him than his own. As Jesus also says during John's version of the Last Supper, "No one has greater love than to lay down their life for their friends."

And yet, as we look to the cross for reassurance about our place in God's plan, the hope is that we'll also be able to look to one another for the same reassurance. One of the many members of this congregation I have come to respect and admire has more than once said to me, "It's not going to be all kum ba yah." They're right. As long as the Church remains a hospital for sinners, and that will be until Christ returns to judge the living and the dead, we're going to doubt, and sometimes simply not believe, that there's a place for all of us. When this happens, and it will happen, tensions and disagreements and hard feelings will follow. Again, on this side of the hereafter, it's never going to be all kum ba yah. But it shall be precisely when we've proven ourselves to be lifelong sinners all over again that we shall have a profound opportunity to reassure one another that there is a place for all of us in the Kingdom of God.

In today's reading from Jeremiah, it's promised that God shall one day eliminate all the go-betweens that can and have confused the knowledge of God; instead coming to us directly and writing "I love you" and "I know what's best for you" straight on to our hearts. In and through the gift of the Holy Spirit, this has now happened. Though we can for a time act as if it's not true, the Holy Spirit has now taught our hearts how to forgive; how to love one another as Christ first loved us. And in a hospital for sinners like this one, if the cross doesn't reassure us that there's a place for us all in the Kingdom of God, then our love for one another, our willingness to forgive one another when there's evidence of repentance, surely will. During this season of Lent, and well after it too, may the Holy Spirit equip and empower us to be more like the Lord our God who is gracious and merciful, slow to anger, and abounding in steadfast love. Like the cross, it's a witness that shall proclaim there's a place for us all in the Kingdom of 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: You was us through and through and remember our sin no more. Make your church a community of forgiveness throughout the world. Give your people courage to forgive; through them show the world new possibilities. Bless ministries of repentance and reconciliation. Hear us, O God. **A: Your mercy is great.**

P: You fill the earth—from tiny grains of wheat to the mighty thunder— with your presence, and you call us to attend to our will for all creation. Grant weather that prepares the soil for seeds; protect all from violent storms, flooding, and wildfires (especially). Hear us, O God. **A: Your mercy is great.**

P: You promise to write your law on our hearts. Guide citizens throughout the world to shape communities that reflect your mercy, justice, and peace, and give them creativity to work for the welfare of all. Hear us, O God.

A: Your mercy is great.

P: You sustain us with your bountiful Spirit. Restore the joy of all who need to know your presence: those who are lonely or feel unforgivable, those who need healing of mind or body, those who are dying, and all who grieve. Hear us, O God.

A: Your mercy is great.

P: Jesus calls us to follow him in life and death. Empower this congregation in discipleship. Equip children and teachers in Sunday school, confirmation and learning ministries. Give us your truth and wisdom and teach us to follow Jesus. Hear us, O God.

A: Your mercy is great.

P: In the cross of Christ, your name is glorified. We praise you for those who have given us words to worship you (especially Thomas Cramer). With all those who have died in Christ, bring us into life everlasting. 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.