



Mount Calvary Connected April 22, 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 Jonathan

Ironically, my first "official" date with my wife Bekah back in 2013 was the same weekend that I adopted a black Labrador Retriever named Tebow. But, from that time on, it was the better part of three years before Bekah and I were married and moved in together, and during that time, Tebow grew accustomed to a certain (very spoiled) lifestyle which changed when we added Bekah to our household.

Even so, he's still pretty spoiled. He has plush dog beds for him both in our living room and bedroom, he routinely gets all sorts of treats (and often table scraps from our daughter Annabelle), he's given free reign of our yard, is regularly invited onto the couch, and given lots of love and affection both from Bekah and I, as well as a certain two year old.

One thing that was always part of our routine was that he'd jump up and spend the last little bit of the morning before I truly got up, laying in our bed next to me. You could guarantee that it would typically be less than five minutes from the time that Bekah got up to shower, that he'd be making his way onto the bed and taking her spot. Sometime in the last year though, that changed. He started having more difficulty making that jump onto the bed the way he had for years, and after a few too many times failing to get his back legs up onto the bed and falling, he's now too scared, embarrassed, or just plain tired, to even try. Without even knowing it, sometime last year I had my last morning to sleep in with my buddy right by my side.

This isn't altogether too surprising. When I adopted him from the shelter seven and a half years ago, I was told he was about five years old, which would make him at least twelve now. The gray hair that is increasingly prevalent on his face and paws, a variety of other health issues, growing problems with incontinence, and a knowledge of the average lifespan of dogs, leads me to believe that our time together on earth with Tebow is quite possibly running short.

But still, maybe now more than ever, Bekah, Annabelle, and I spoil him in just about every way possible.

Isn't it funny that we devote so much love and attention to companion animals like dogs, cats, hamsters, snakes, and who knows what else, knowing that their time on earth is so much shorter than our own? Someone who loves a dog or cat doesn't say, "oh, they'll only be around for ten years or so, no reason to make a fuss..." in fact, it is often exactly the opposite. With full knowledge that we will outlive our pets, we shower them with as much love, affection, kindness, and care as we possibly can for as long as we can.

And if we are capable of that, how much more so is God? God who created the heavens and the earth, God who was in existence before the first humans, and will almost certainly be here after the last, showers us with love, and affection, knowing that our time on earth is short, but wanting to keep on loving us all the same.

The Easter season is a great time to reflect on how we are spoiled by God's love. Our time on earth is so short, and we often do things that are far worse than a dog chewing up a pair of shoes, but God loves us all the same. Thanks be to God.

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

Flowers

In memory of Kylie Nerone by the Whetzels

Calling Graduates & Families

The Youth Ministry team would like to honor all those graduating as part of the class of 2021 (high school, trade school, college, etc.) To ensure we don't miss anyone, please forward information about graduates to Pastor Jonathan, including their name, where/what they're graduating from, and a recent photo if you have one.

Pond and Litter

We need your help to clean up the pond and the litter on Luray and Frances Streets. Please bring sickles, weed eater, etc. Plastic gloves will be provided. We will meet on **Thursday, April 29 at 5:30 PM.**

Weed and Feed

The Property Committee will have a weed and feed night on **Thursday, May 13, at 5:00 PM.** Please bring your shovels, rakes, etc. There will be plenty of mulch to spread. Many hands will make light work.

Flea Market Reminder

The Flea Market is scheduled for **May 8, 2021 from 8:00 to 12:00.** If you have any donations, you may bring them in any time between 9-3 pm, Monday – Thursday and place them in the hallway by 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.

Backyard Cookie Collection will be Thursday, April 29, 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!

Stimulus Challenge

A member of our congregation has challenged others to put their economic stimulus money to good use!

One morning in March, a member of the congregation presented Pastor Scott with a check for \$140. She shared that she had received her "economic impact payment" (stimulus check) and since she had not been adversely impacted by the pandemic, she was giving a portion of it as a tithe, and wanted to challenge others to do the same.

Since sharing this news, other families in the congregation have come forward and over a thousand dollars has been collected. Soon, we'll poll those who contributed to this challenge and mutually decide on a worthy cause in the community to direct the money toward. But, in the meantime, there is still opportunity to make YOUR tithe!

If you'd like to make a gift, simply write a check to Mount Calvary, with "Stimulus Challenge" in the memo line. Checks can be included in the offering plate during worship, dropped off at the church office during business hours, or mailed to the church at Mount Calvary Lutheran Church, 1000 Scalp Ave, Johnstown, PA 15904.

Weekly Wednesday, Drive in Services

Wednesday evening drive-in services have resumed at 6:30 pm. Download a bulletin from: <https://www.mt-calvarylutheran.org/bulletins/>, bring your own bread for communion, and tune your radio to 88.3FM and you are set!

See you there!

Church Directory

We would like to update the church directory. Many people are going to only cell phones instead of landlines. Please call the church office to update your number and any other information that has changed, address, email etc.

Tuesday Noon Recitals at First Lutheran Church

April 27 - Henry Davis. Piano. Gospell Improv

Note: Because of Covid-19 restrictions lunch is not served after recitals. Attendees must wear masks and follow social-distance guidelines. Invite family and friends to this weekday gift of music.

Birthdays and Anniversary for the Week April 25 - May 1, 2021.

Apr. 26 - Darrick Bantley, Michael Barkley, Cassidy Eash, Kelsie Vivis

Apr. 27 - Linda Carter, Glen Elliott Jr., John Given, Stephanie Hockensmith, Sandy Plunkard, Stacy Pollino

Apr. 28 - David Carney, Martina Glessner, Lisa Gusmenotti, Matthew Karnes, Alex Kostick, Phil Mertz,
Logan Rickley

Apr. 29 - Timothy Bassett II, Les Morgenstern, Seth Saloney

Apr. 30 - Dennis Eschrich, Charles Ling Jr.

May 1 - Shirley Brendle, Norma Culp

April 25 - James & Cynthia Colvin (34 years), Charles & Caroline Palm (75 years)

April 30 - Timothy & Dianne Verostick (38 years)

About Our Members:

Bill McMullen passed away on April 13, 2021.

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

Remember those that prayer has been requested:

Joyce Morgenstern, Kadence, Jack, Denny, Gina, Rick, Linda & Dick, Colley Family, Jose and Family, Irene, Midge, Vic, Felix Family, Miller Family, Kevin, Kinzey Family, Anita, Claudia, Bill, Liam, Brown Family, Dolly & Chis Palm, David, Karen, Lauren, Billy, Patti Sliko, Pat, McMullen Family, Maxine Hale, Pastor Greg Harbaugh & Family, Pastor Toby Holland & Family, and Linda Sell

Financial Update through March

Though still in the red for the year, Mt. Calvary's financial position improved as February gave way to March. Positively, things have gotten even better in the month of April. This was anticipated, but it was still reassuring to see all the pieces come together. For this year's plan to work, we all just need to do our part by maintaining what we gave the prior year or going back to the levels of giving in place before the pandemic disrupted so much. As to committee expenditures, all but the Property Team are currently under budget. Once winter-

related expenses give way to spring and summer, much of the current coverage related to property expenditures should work itself out.

CONDENSED WORSHIP FOR THE WEEKEND OF SUNDAY, APRIL 18, 2021.

PRAYER OF THE DAY

Holy and righteous God, you are the author of life, and you adopt us to be your children. Fill us with your words of life, that we may live as witnesses to the resurrection 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: ACTS 3:12-19

After healing a man unable to walk, Peter preaches to the people, describing how God's promises to Israel have been fulfilled in Jesus. Through the proclamation of Christ's death and resurrection, God is offering them forgiveness and restoration in Jesus' name.

¹²[Peter] addressed the people, "You Israelites, why do you wonder at this, or why do you stare at us, as though by our own power or piety we had made him walk?¹³The God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob, the God of our ancestors has glorified his servant Jesus, whom you handed over and rejected in the presence of Pilate, though he had decided to release him. ¹⁴But you rejected the Holy and Righteous One and asked to have a murderer given to you, ¹⁵and you killed the Author of life, whom God raised from the dead. To this we are witnesses. ¹⁶And by faith in his name, his name itself has made this man strong, whom you see and know; and the faith that is through Jesus has given him this perfect health in the presence of all of you.

¹⁷"And now, friends, I know that you acted in ignorance, as did also your rulers. ¹⁸In this way God fulfilled what he had foretold through all the prophets, that his Messiah would suffer. ¹⁹Repent therefore, and turn to God so that your sins may be wiped out."

SECOND READING: 1 JOHN 3:1-7

God has loved us in order to make us children of God. Though we do not yet know the full details of our future existence, we trust that God will reveal it just as God revealed Jesus to take away our sins.

¹See what love the Father has given us, that we should be called children of God; and that is what we are. The reason the world does not know us is that it did not know him. ²Beloved, we are God's children now; what we will be has not yet been revealed. What we do know is this: when he is revealed, we will be like him, for we will see him as he is. ³And all who have this hope in him purify themselves, just as he is pure.

⁴Everyone who commits sin is guilty of lawlessness; sin is lawlessness. ⁵You know that he was revealed to take away sins, and in him there is no sin. ⁶No one who abides in him sins; no one who sins has either seen him or known him. ⁷Little children, let no one deceive you. Everyone who does what is right is righteous, just as he is righteous.

GOSPEL: LUKE 24:36B-48

In this account of an appearance after his resurrection, Jesus opens the minds of the disciples to understand him as Messiah. Jesus convinces them that he has been raised and sends them on a mission to proclaim the message of repentance and forgiveness.

^{36b}Jesus himself stood among [the disciples] and said to them, "Peace be with you." ³⁷They were startled and terrified, and thought that they were seeing a ghost. ³⁸He said to them, "Why are you frightened, and why

do doubts arise in your hearts? ³⁹Look at my hands and my feet; see that it is I myself. Touch me and see; for a ghost does not have flesh and bones as you see that I have.” ⁴⁰And when he had said this, he showed them his hands and his feet. ⁴¹While in their joy they were disbelieving and still wondering, he said to them, “Have you anything here to eat?” ⁴²They gave him a piece of broiled fish, ⁴³and he took it and ate in their presence.

⁴⁴Then he said to them, “These are my words that I spoke to you while I was still with you—that everything written about me in the law of Moses, the prophets, and the psalms must be fulfilled.” ⁴⁵Then he opened their minds to understand the scriptures, ⁴⁶and he said to them, “Thus it is written, that the Messiah is to suffer and to rise from the dead on the third day, ⁴⁷and that repentance and forgiveness of sins is to be proclaimed in his name to all nations, beginning from Jerusalem. ⁴⁸You are witnesses of these things.”

SERMON BY PASTOR SCOTT

Spring is a time of wonder and delight. Silence gives way to the sound of singing birds. Formerly cold and dry nostrils are filled with the smell of grills again in use. Eyes see barren trees burst forth with colorful buds, flowers, and leaves. Spring is a time of wonder and delight. It never grows old or trite and I must say Johnstown does spring well. My soul has more than once been aroused by the sight of blooming and flowering trees in Moxham and Ferndale. With it being a time of wonder and delight, spring certainly is a fitting home for the season of Easter.

I mean: Easter too is a wonder and a delight. To be honest, we really can't enter into the flow of today's readings from Scripture until we appreciate this. In those readings, Easter is such a wonder that Peter has to explain what's going on to bewildered people in our reading from Acts. Easter is such a wonder that our reading from 1st John says we have no present way of anticipating or visualizing where it will carry us in the end. Easter is such a wonder that in our reading from Luke Jesus has to open his disciples' minds as to how his death and resurrection were foretold by Scripture all along. To recall a parable of Jesus that makes use of the rhythms of spring, Easter is that it'sy-bitsy mustard seed that grows well beyond its inauspicious beginnings to become a safe and secure home for the birds of the air. Like spring itself, Easter too is a wonder and delight.

Think about it. If Easter were not a wonder, there would be no excuse for the ignorance that Peter speaks about in our reading from Acts. Those he addresses found Jesus to be such a mustard seed, such a nothing and a nobody, that they chose a murderer named Barabbas over him. Peter's hearers didn't see Easter coming. They didn't have the foggiest idea that Jesus was the Author of Life; the King of kings and Lord of lords. And Peter wasn't much better.

If Easter were not a wonder, there would be no excuse for Peter's denial and betrayal of Christ in the hours leading up to the cross. And it may just be that Easter remains an unpredictable and unfathomable unknown for some today. If so, their ignorance shall be forgiven. It's why Jesus from the cross prayed, “Father, forgive them for they know not what they do.” Easter is such a wonder that we can't anticipate it in word and deed. Until we discover the wonder and the delight of Easter, all we can do is live in ignorance as Peter and his hearers once did and as some still do today. But what about when Easter is out in the open? Do things change then?

It's here where we really enter into dialogue with today's appointed scriptures. Our reading from Luke informs us that once Easter had become a discovered wonder for the first disciples, they were to invite all nations to repent and to enjoy the fresh and never-ending start we have in Jesus. With Christ out of the tomb and forever vindicated by God, the first disciples were to announce that lives lived in Christ are built on stone and lives lived apart from him are built on sand. And sure enough, this is what Peter does in our reading from Acts.

By way of both healing and proclamation, Peter documents the wonder and the delight otherwise known as Easter so his hearers might discover it. And then, having put Easter out in the open for people, Peter wastes no time. With Easter a discovered wonder, he immediately invites his hearers to repent so their sins, the fruit of their prior ignorance, might be wiped out. This is how the rules of engagement change after Easter is out of the bag and out in the open. Once Easter becomes a discovered wonder, there's no longer any excuse for resisting Jesus and his way of faith, hope, and love. Once the wonder and delight of Easter become as real as singing birds, smoking grills, and blooming trees, it's time to repent. It's time to turn in Christ's direction and to follow

after him; doing and speaking as he himself would. It's why our reading from 1st John somewhat shockingly says that no one who abides in the crucified and resurrected Christ sins. It's not that we're no longer going to sin and fall short. It's that we're no longer going to water down Christ and his way. It's that we're no longer going to call sin anything other than sin; one of many possible departures from Christ and his way of faith, hope, and love. Once Easter is out in the open, we no longer suffer fools gladly. Once Easter has become as real for us as the marvelous flowering trees of Ferndale Avenue in spring, we no longer trade in the ignorance of the world; instead trading in the wisdom of Christ. This is how things are to change for us when we discover the wonder and the delight of Easter.

Think of it as if you were someone who had closed the door on a bad relationship. One of my favorite breakup songs is "Feel a Whole Letter Better;" first recorded by the Byrds and then later by Tom Petty. Given the huge Tom Petty fan I am, it's surprising I didn't think of it when I was selecting songs for this service. It would have been appropriate. Once we discover the wonder and the delight of Easter, we say to the ignorance of the world with which we were formerly enraptured and enthralled, "I feel a whole better when you're gone because Christ is the Way, the Truth, and the Life." But even though I forgot Tom Petty and the Byrds in my initial preparations for this service, I didn't forget Gloria Gaynor and her song "I Will Survive." It's how things are to go once the wonder and the delight of Easter become real for us. Once we know the wonder and the delight of Easter, we know we'll survive if we say no to the world and yes to Christ. And so, when the ignorance of the world comes knocking, asking for another date, may we say, "Go on now! Go! Walk out the door! Just turn around now! You're not welcome here anymore." And believe you me! We do have the opportunity to discover the wonder and the delight of Easter that enables and empowers such words here at Mt. Calvary Lutheran Church.

Is Jesus going to appear for us as he once appeared for St. Paul on the way to Damascus? Probably not! Can we go back in time to the empty tomb itself? No, we can't. But this isn't necessary. Thousands of years and miles removed from ancient Palestine, we can discover the wonder and the delight of Easter in one another. It's one of the things I appreciate most about our reading from Acts. Those to whom Peter preaches discover the wonder and the delight of Easter not through one-on-one contact with Christ or the empty tomb, but through exposure to how Christ is rising in Peter and the other disciples. Christ's powerful healing flows through them and this makes Easter real for others. And though our present-day miracles might not follow the same script, you better believe miracles still abound in the Church.

Here at Mt. Calvary in our confirmation class we have teenagers concerned not about themselves, but about persecuted people much of the world ignores, if the world knows about them at all. Here at Mt. Calvary stimulus dollars are rolling in for the needy rather than for more stuff we don't need. Here at Mt. Calvary an aged person with many healthcare needs was for a time rescued from inattentive nursing home care by someone who was not a blood relative, but a sister in Christ. Here at Mt. Calvary, there are dedicated volunteers who drive miles to care for the children of Coopersdale or to pick up an item for a sale benefitting our ministry. Here at Mt. Calvary, we've got those who will cancel a scheduled trip to see out of town children so they might answer a call to serve Christ and his Church. Make no mistake about it! The wonder and the delight of Easter can be discovered here at Mt. Calvary Lutheran. Christ is rising from the dead all around us in and through each other. With Easter now out in the open, it's time for only one way and that Christ's way of faith, hope, and love. Practicing repentance in the process, when the ignorance of the world comes knocking again as it will, asking for another date, may we be therefore be empowered and emboldened to say, "Go on now! Go! Walk out that door! Just turn around now! You're not welcome here anymore, for in Christ I will do more than survive. I will conquer and triumph; forever enjoying the forgiveness of sins, the resurrection of the body, and the life everlasting." Amen!

PRAYERS OF INTERCESSION

Alive in the risen Christ by the power of the Holy Spirit, we bring our prayers before God who promises to hear us and answer in steadfast love.

Living God, in the midst of Easter joy we are still filled with questions and wondering. Open our hearts and minds as we encounter the scriptures, so that the church embodies repentance and forgiveness in the name of Jesus to all nations. Hear us, O God.

Your mercy is great.

Creating God, like a master artist you have fashioned the universe out of your love and delight. Heal your creation where it is in need of restoration (*local concerns for creation may be named*). Provide all the inhabitants of earth a peaceful and sustainable home. Hear us, O God.

Your mercy is great.

God of all, the nations hunger and thirst for your righteousness. Many call on you for guidance and strength. Answer their hopes with the peace of Christ and give your lovingkindness to national, state, and local leaders of people. Hear us, O God.

Your mercy is great.

Healing God, you hear the cries of those in need and answer them in their distress. Grant to those who are sick and suffering your compassion and nurse them back to health and wholeness (*especially*). Be close to the hearts of the lonely. Hear us, O God.

Your mercy is great.

Loving Parent, you have given us such love that we should be called the children of God. Reveal yourself to us so that we in this community of faith will become more and more like you in our mutual love and bold witness. Hear us, O God.

Your mercy is great.

God of all times and ages, those who have died in you now see you as you are. We thank you for their lives among us (*especially*). Assure us of the peace you have promised, that we may join them in everlasting life. Hear us, O God.

Your mercy is great.

In the hope of new life in Christ, we raise our prayers to you, trusting in your never-ending goodness and mercy; through Jesus Christ our Lord.

Amen.