



Mount Calvary Connected

May 13, 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.

Pastor Scott Klimke

Cell-Phone: 570-367-3421

Email: sklimke6@gmail.com

Pastor Jonathan Adams

Cell-Phone: 412-817-6704

Email: revjonoadams@gmail.com

A Message from Pastor Scott

On Sunday, the eight young adults in confirmation passed an oral exam which took up all the essential information in The Apostles' Creed. Practicing the teamwork of the Church, they each could pass to another member of the class once, if they didn't know the answer to a question. If the person to whom they passed their question had the answer they lacked, no points were subtracted from the group's overall score. I'm happy to report the group did very, very well. If the grading code used in school would have been in play, they would have gotten an A. Good for them! Thanks to the Holy Spirit for all the spiritual growth I've seen in this year's group of confirmation students!

Several of the questions those in confirmation had to answer dealt with the major festival the Church celebrates today. Today is the festival of our Lord's ascension. Along with the festival of our Lord's nativity, our Lord's epiphany, our Lord's resurrection, the descent of the Holy Spirit on Pentecost, and the festival of the Holy Trinity, the festival of our Lord's ascension is one of the Church's seven, major festivals. The first question those in confirmation had to answer related to our Lord's ascension was: How many days after Easter did our Lord ascend into heaven? As those in confirmation correctly answered, the answer is that forty days separate our Lord's resurrection and our Lord's ascension. One can find the biblical justification for this chronology at Acts 1:3. In practical terms, the forty days separating our Lord's resurrection and our Lord's ascension help to explain why Ascension Day often isn't celebrated as if it is in fact one of the Church's seven, major festivals. Because of the chromoly involved, the festival of our Lord's ascension always falls on a Thursday—not a traditional churchgoing day.

If one reads the account of our Lord's ascension as recorded by Acts 1:6-11, you'll note that the account ends with the disciples being told to stop gawking at the sky into which Jesus has just ascended. It's time for the disciples to bring their eyes back down to the ground so that they might see where God has earthly missions for them to engage and to complete. This brings me to another question those in confirmation answered correctly on Sunday. When asked about what Jesus would have us do until he returns to judge the living and the dead, they correctly answered that Jesus would have us love one another and our neighbors without restriction unless our generosity would harm us or others, including the person we might help. The biblical justification for this understanding of the Church's mission is found in places like 1 John 3:17.

The final question about today's festival this year's confirmation class had to answer was related to Jesus being seated at the right hand of the Father after his ascension. The New Testament references to Jesus now at the right hand of the Father are numerous. As those in confirmation correctly answered on Sunday, the idea behind Jesus being at the right hand of the Father plays off how most people's dominant hand is their right hand. With the right hand being most people's strongest and most powerful hand, the thought behind saying Jesus is at the right hand of the Father is that Jesus has all the strength, power, and authority of God the Father at his disposal. Also embedded in the doctrine of the Holy Trinity, we see this understanding of what it means for Jesus to be at the right of the Father at play in passages like Acts 2:33 and 1 Peter 3:22.

When paired with the supplementary promise that Jesus is constantly at the right ear of God whispering on our behalf (Romans 8:34), the basic idea is that Jesus has everything he needs to keep his Church well and to bring it to completion and perfection. With Jesus at the right ear of God interceding for us and having access to everything heaven has to offer, we can trust that we will in fact receive whatever we need to bear fruit as the Church (John 15:7-8). Let's take this promise to heart and keep on inviting every generation on a shared journey to Christian growth. As the festival of our Lord's ascension promises every year, Jesus wants us to succeed and has both the resources and the heavenly connections to make it happen. Christ is risen! Alleluia!

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

May/June Giving Tree

During the months of May and June, coupons for Stivers Nursery will be for sale after the weekend services and available in the church office. **Baskets are \$16.00 and flats are \$12.50.** Mt. Calvary will receive \$5 for every basket and \$3 for every flat purchased. The money raised will be used for the Giving Tree and donated to The Cambria City Mission at the end of June. Thank you for your continued support!

Backyard Cookie Collection will be Thursday, May 20, 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!

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.

Memorials

Bill McMullen – Shirley Glova

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.

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.

Birthdays and Anniversaries for the Week: May 16 - May 22, 2021.

May 16 - Christopher Morningstar, Samantha Schroyer, Diane Venet

May 18 - Taylor Clouse, William Coble II, Allison Popp

May 19 - Vincente Lorenzo, Jenny Waterhouse

May 20 - Sarah Forosisky, Austin Nider, Debbie Thomas

May 21 - Bridgette Horn

May 20 - Michael & Jackie Cassidy (26 years)

Christopher & Tiffany Swartz (21 years)

May 22 - Ralph & Rosemary Manotti, Sr. (50 years)

About Our Members:

Pastor Scott and fellow members of Mt. Calvary,

Our love and thanks for the many calls, cards, and warm wishes we received after Bill's passing. It touched our hearts and will always be remembered.

In God's love, Linda McMullen & Family

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

Remember those that prayer has been requested:

Patti Sliko, Pat, McMullen Family, Pastor Greg Harbaugh & Family, Pastor Toby Holland & Family, Linda Sell, Patti Finnegan, Richard Isaac Pentz, Michelle Roberts, Jill McEntee, Cissy, Cadence, Maxine Hale, Linda & Dick, Midge, Dolly & Chis Palm, David, Karen, Lauren, and Billy.

NEW Financial Update through April

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 overage related to property expenditures should work itself out.

CONDENSED WORSHIP FOR THE WEEKEND OF SUNDAY, MAY 9, 2021.

PRAYER OF THE DAY

P: O God, you have prepared for those who love you incomprehensible joys. Pour into our hearts such love that, loving you above all things, we may obtain your promises, which exceed all we can desire; through Jesus Christ, your Son and our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever.

A: Amen.

FIRST READING: ACTS 10:44-48

While Peter shares the good news of Jesus with a Gentile soldier and his family, the Holy Spirit comes upon them. Recognizing that the Spirit works inclusively in the lives of both Jews and Gentiles, Peter commands that these Gentiles also be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ.

⁴⁴While Peter was still speaking, the Holy Spirit fell upon all who heard the word. ⁴⁵The circumcised believers who had come with Peter were astounded that the gift of the Holy Spirit had been poured out even on the Gentiles, ⁴⁶for they heard them speaking in tongues and extolling God. Then Peter said, ⁴⁷“Can anyone withhold the water for baptizing these people who have received the Holy Spirit just as we have?” ⁴⁸So he ordered them to be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ. Then they invited him to stay for several days.

SECOND READING: 1 JOHN 5:1-6

God’s children believe that Jesus is the Messiah and love God by keeping God’s commandments. Thus the world is conquered not through military might but through love and faith.

¹Everyone who believes that Jesus is the Christ has been born of God, and everyone who loves the parent loves the child. ²By this we know that we love the children of God, when we love God and obey his commandments. ³For the love of God is this, that we obey his commandments. And his commandments are not burdensome, ⁴for whatever is born of God conquers the world. And this is the victory that conquers the world, our faith. ⁵Who is it that conquers the world but the one who believes that Jesus is the Son of God?

⁶This is the one who came by water and blood, Jesus Christ, not with the water only but with the water and the blood. And the Spirit is the one that testifies, for the Spirit is the truth.

GOSPEL: JOHN 15:9-17

On the night of his arrest, Jesus delivers a final testimony to his disciples to help them in the days ahead. Here, he repeats the most important of all his commands, that they love one another.

Jesus said: ⁹“As the Father has loved me, so I have loved you; abide in my love. ¹⁰If you keep my commandments, you will abide in my love, just as I have kept my Father’s commandments and abide in his love. ¹¹I have said these things to you so that my joy may be in you, and that your joy may be complete.

¹²“This is my commandment, that you love one another as I have loved you. ¹³No one has greater love than this, to lay down one’s life for one’s friends. ¹⁴You are my friends if you do what I command you. ¹⁵I do not call you servants any longer, because the servant does not know what the master is doing; but I have called you friends, because I have made known to you everything that I have heard from my Father. ¹⁶You did not choose

me but I chose you. And I appointed you to go and bear fruit, fruit that will last, so that the Father will give you whatever you ask him in my name. ¹⁷I am giving you these commands so that you may love one another.”

SERMON BY PASTOR SCOTT

Today’s reading from Acts brings us full circle. We’re back where we were on Easter weekend; Acts chapter ten. There are perhaps two reasons for this return to where we have previously been not so long ago. The first is that a return to Acts chapter ten today is more reflective of what happens after the resurrection of Christ in the gospel of Luke and the descent of the Holy Spirit in the book of Acts. On Easter weekend, we skip over an awful lot to cherry pick from a sermon in Acts chapter ten. Today, we return to Acts chapter ten, to let what follows from Easter and the descent of the Holy Spirit proceed in more linear fashion. Having previously heard from Acts chapter three, Acts chapter four, and Acts chapter eight this Eastertide, today we get to Acts chapter ten; with the Good News of Easter now farther out from Jerusalem than it’s ever been before. When we don’t cherry pick from St. Luke’s second volume as we almost always do on Easter weekend, it’s how it goes in the book of Acts. In St. Luke’s two volume set, it’s wait in Jerusalem for the Holy Spirit and then take the Good News of Easter as far out from Jerusalem as you can. A return to Acts chapter ten today honors this outward and onward from Jerusalem trajectory; with Peter now north of Jerusalem sharing the Good News of Easter with a non-Jewish person and Roman official named Cornelius.

But a return to Acts chapter ten today might also be meant to clarify what we first hear Peter preach on Easter weekend pretty much every year. To be sure, what Peter has to say most Easter weekends is Good News. He announces the God of Israel shows no partiality. He announces that the resurrection proves Jesus is Lord of all and that of course includes you and me. This is Easter through and through. In Acts chapter ten, Peter announces that Easter is for everyone. He says there’s a place for all of us in God’s family and plan. It’s Good News we all need to hear at some point, if not all the time.

Let’s face it. Life is not always affirming or welcoming. Whether in reality or by way of perception, life sometimes leaves us feeling as if we’re on the outside looking in with no one ready to open a door or window so we can come inside. Sometimes life makes us feel like the ugly duckling, the black sheep, the unwanted child, the middle child, or the stepchild. I really can’t tell you the first time I was left feeling this way. It might have been when I had to start wearing glasses in the first grade. Who wants to be called “four-eyes” as I was? It also might have been when my mom was my substitute teacher in second grade. Both inside and outside of the home, it’s not always fun to be a teacher’s kid. It also could have been in third grade when I was not allowed to visit my dying Grandma Klimke in the intensive care unit because I was too young by the standards of that time. The simple fact of the matter is that my life has been filled with experiences and episodes which have made me feel alone and off in my own corner. The same thing has happened to you and it never stops.

Why in comparison to people my age or older do I have so few family members still living? Am I unlucky? Does God have it out for me? Or what about this? Why do my experiences in the military and in the business sector sometimes make me feel as if I’m a pastor from a different planet? Taken together and apart, this is the fifty-three-year-old version of the stuff I first began to feel in elementary school. No matter how much younger or older than me you are, you have your own version of the same. Given how much life can mess with our confidence and hope and sense of accomplishment, we need affirmation. We need someone to leave the light on for us. We need someone to embrace us and our lives with real and genuine hospitality. And through Acts chapter ten, pretty much every Easter weekend, we hear that God is this person. But is this what we really hear? There’s a part of Peter’s sermon on Easter weekend that can leave this in doubt. Returning to Acts chapter ten again today, gives us the opportunity to set the record straight.

If there’s anything which does in fact require corrective or clarifying attention, it would arise from what Peter says just after he announces that the God of Israel is impartial and just before he announces that Jesus is Lord of all. In between these twin pronouncements of the Good News of Easter, Peter says this. He says that the God of Israel is impartial because in every nation he accepts anyone who fears him and does what is right. If not put into some kind of context, this can easily pass itself off as another litmus test we have to pass. Without clarifying or correction attention, we can hear that to be a part of God’s family and plan, we may not have to be

Jewish, but we do have to fear him and do what is right. Ugh! As unconfident and insecure as we all can be, it's the last thing we need. We don't need another litmus test. We don't need another corner of our lives where we have to measure up. Imagine how another litmus test might be received by the women we celebrate this weekend. Often, as our opening song has suggested today, these women are already too hard on themselves. The last thing they need is another litmus test to pass or another bar or hurdle to clear. Take my own mother as an example.

Going on forty years after it happened, my mother still wonders if she and my father did the right thing when prior to high school they pulled my sister out of the public school system and put her in a private, Lutheran academy where she had to fit in with girls she didn't know and who had all known each other since kindergarten. It had been a transition that worked out okay for me, but not necessarily for my sister. Along similar lines, soon to be nineteen years after it happened, my mother still wonders if she did the right thing when she went to work on the day my father died at home prior to a scheduled doctor's appointment for an ongoing respiratory infection. This is where my mom goes naturally and whether we're mothers or not I think we've all got our own version of my mother's anxieties, insecurities, and worries. We don't need another litmus test. We don't need something else to worry about. We don't need another bar or hurdle to clear. What we need is for God to say, "You measure up." What we need is for God to say, "You're in, not out." What we need is for God to say, "I love you and I always will." And if we didn't hear God say this when we first visited Acts chapter ten five weeks ago, it's there to be heard today.

Today there's no talk of fearing God and doing the right thing. Instead, there's talk of the member of the Holy Trinity who makes this all happen and that's the Holy Spirit. Today there's just one thing which verifies our membership in God's family and our inclusion in God's plan and that's the gift of the Holy Spirit. If God's given you the Holy Spirit, Peter says today, you're in; you measure up in God's eyes; you're an integral part of God's family and plan. And make no mistake about it. The Holy Spirit has fallen on us just as the Spirit once fell on Cornelius and his household to the amazement of St. Peter. By the grace of God, the Holy Spirit is there to fall on us when we're baptized, when we interact with the Bible, when we share in the holy meal, and when we interact with one another. Like Cornelius and many, many Christians since, the gift of the Holy Spirit has fallen on us. We're in. We measure up in the eyes of God. The only judge who shall matter in the end loves us and always will. Now let's just go be our God-given selves and be completely okay with it. Amen!

PRAYERS OF INTERCESSION

P: 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.

P: Loving God, you call us to be your fruit-bearing church. Strengthen the bonds among all Christian churches. Today we pray for the Moravian Church, giving thanks for the life and witness of Nicolaus Ludwig von Zinzendorf, renewer of the church and hymnwriter. Hear us, O God. **A: Your mercy is great.**

P: Creating God, the earth praises you. The seas roar and the hills sing for joy. Fill the earth with your love so that by their song, all creatures of land and sea and sky, burrowing and soaring, may call us to join with them in praise. Hear us, O God. **A: Your mercy is great.**

P: Faithful Savior, you conquer the world not with weapons but with undying love. Plant your word in the hearts of the nations' leaders and give them your Spirit, so that the people of the world may live in peace. Hear us, O God. **A: Your mercy is great.**

P: Caring Healer, you forget no one and accompany the lonely. Be present with those who are sick or suffering (*especially*). Provide for those needing homes or medical care and point us towards life-changing responses to these needs in our own communities. Be with the dying (*especially*). Hear us, O God. **A: Your mercy is great.**

P: Gracious God, as a mother comforts her child, you comfort us. Bless mothers and mothering people in our lives. Comfort those who miss their mothers, mothers who grieve, those who grieve because they cannot be mothers, and those who have never known a loving mother. Hear us, O God. **A: Your mercy is great.**

P: Gentle Redeemer, all who die in you abide in your presence forever. We remember with thanksgiving those who shared your love throughout their lives (*especially*). Keep us united with them in your lasting love. Hear us, O God. **A: Your mercy is great.**

P: 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. **A: Amen.**