



# Mount Calvary Connected

May 20, 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](mailto:sklimke6@gmail.com)

**Pastor Jonathan Adams**

Cell-Phone: 412-817-6704

Email: [revjonoadams@gmail.com](mailto:revjonoadams@gmail.com)

## A Message from Pastor Jonathan

The most direct route from my home in Davidsville to Mount Calvary is a back road that winds its way down to the Stonycreek River before winding its way back up out of the valley and emerging in Paint Borough just outside Windber. Having traveled this road numerous times a week even before I joined you at Mount Calvary means that I'm familiar with its every twist and curve and can normally make good time.

BUT, since it's one single road winding through the countryside, it's not uncommon to hit roadblocks that require turning around and going a different way. One day last month, I started down into the valley on this road only to encounter a coach bus that had gotten stuck on one of the "switchback" turns, completely blocking traffic while waiting for a tow truck. A week or so later I came around a bend to encounter a Conemaugh Township police car blocking the road with its lights flashing. A large tree had fallen across the road and he was waiting for the fire department to arrive to cut it up.

I'm not the type of person who only knows one way to get to my most common destinations, and so in both cases (and at least a handful of other occasions over the years), I was quick to do a three-point turn and find an alternate route. When blocked by the bus, I ended up going down through Tire Hill to the bottom of Eisenhower Boulevard, and then up through Belmont to come out behind the church. I was amazed to see that this "long way around" actually seemed quicker, and so when the downed tree impeded my trip I timed it, and it is in fact quicker, at least at certain times of the day!

Here's the thing: each one of us gets set in our patterns and habits; not just the routes we take to and from work, but everything about how we view and interact with the world, too. Even if you're someone who routinely challenges the status quo, you undoubtedly have things that you always do a certain way. And sometimes, when we get pushed out of our comfort zone, we find that we can get the same end result with a completely different process, and that maybe the end result is even a bit better!

It was with a lot of joy that I received the news last Thursday that the CDC is now indicating that fully vaccinated individuals can go maskless for most day-to-day activities. It is a great indication that we are finally making some headway in our return to normal. Your congregational leaders, both Pastor Scott and I, as well as church council, have already been giving thought to what that transition will look like. The end is almost certainly in sight.

But even so, the reality is that the route we take back to "normal" will likely still be different from what we're most familiar with. We'll have to make some adjustments, some turns, maybe even some compromises. But we'll still make it to the destination, we'll still be gathering together as a community of faith in Christ Jesus.

And we might even find that we like the new route a bit better.

Yours in Christ, Pastor Jonathan

## The Transition Begins!

The Commonwealth of Pennsylvania has now endorsed the new, mask-wearing counsel released by the CDC last week. This means effective immediately mask-wearing will become optional for immunized people at Mount Calvary Lutheran Church. As this new policy is implemented, we will continue to practice social distancing and encourage everyone to respond to the verbal and nonverbal cues of those who remain wary of getting too close to others. For those curious about changes with regard to in-person singing and the method of in-person communion distribution, please note it's possible that changes may begin to appear as soon as the first weekend in June.

As we follow the government's counsel on mask-wearing for immunized people, we would encourage everyone to remember that just because a person of faith can do something doesn't necessarily mean they will. Martin Luther once expressed this in memorable language when he wrote, "A Christian is a perfectly free lord of all, subject to none. A Christian is a perfectly dutiful servant of all, subject to all." In practical terms, this means at least two things for us presently. Number one, even if we are immunized, we may wish to continue to wear masks to enter into supportive solidarity with the unimmunized and those who are reluctant to abandon masks just yet. Number two, even though proof of immunization will not be required at Mount Calvary, if we aren't immunized, we should continue to wear masks or face shields until we are so we might not unintentionally harm another unimmunized person. In both cases, we may now be free from a mask mandate, but we are not free from the Christian obligation to make personal sacrifices which would benefit others.

For those who are not yet ready to return to in-person worship or are uncomfortable with a more lenient policy with respect to masks, please remember our drive-in service on Wednesdays at 6:30 PM in the rear of church. Also, please remember our radio offerings (8:45 AM on Sundays and 6:30 PM on Wednesdays) and the Facebook videos we release on Wednesday evenings.

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### 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.

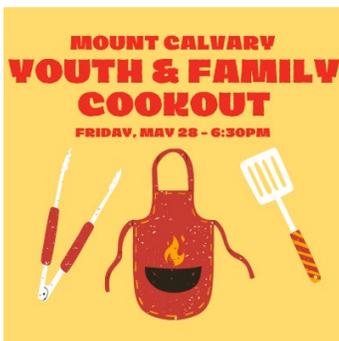
By clicking the following link, you can gain access to the live stream audio. <https://streams.radiomast.io/96172026-6cba-407b-9090-e150b471ae0e>

Weekly worship bulletins can be found at: [www.rebrand.ly/MtCalvaryWorship](http://www.rebrand.ly/MtCalvaryWorship)



### Mount Calvary's summer VBS is "God's Secret Agents of Change!"

Join us on Saturdays June 12, July 17, and August 21st for a special program for kids entering Pre-K through 5th grade. The program will run each night from 4-5pm with a picnic meal served at 5pm and an invitation to join us for evening worship afterwards. For more information, contact Pastor Jono at [RevJonoAdams@gmail.com](mailto:RevJonoAdams@gmail.com) or 412-817-6704.



Mount Calvary invites all church youth and their families to a cookout on Friday, May 28th at 6:30pm. Come celebrate the end of the school year and the beginning of the summer and let US do the cooking. Reconnect with other Mt. Calvary families you may not have seen in a while in this outdoor gathering among friends. Mount Calvary will provide hamburgers, hotdogs, drinks, and paper products. Bring a lawn or camp chair and yourself!

RSVPs are strongly encouraged to help us have enough food. RSVP to Pastor Jono directly at [RevJonoAdams@gmail.com](mailto:RevJonoAdams@gmail.com) or 412-817-6704, or on the event on the church facebook page.

### 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!

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### Backyard Cookie Collection will be Thursday, June 3, 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!

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### 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.

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### 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!

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### 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.

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### 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.

<b>Birthdays and Anniversaries for the Week: May 23 - May 29, 2021.</b>
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**May 23** - Krista Bassett, Jason Brehm, Paige Lumley, Kathryn McQuiade

**May 24** - Anthony Lorenzo

**May 25** - Andrew Bucior, Michael Philibin

**May 26** - Benjamin Dallman, Lisa Fancella, Sonya Herring, Ryan Manotti

**May 27** - Carrie Eash, David Karnes

**May 28** - Nancy Curry, Matthew Goehres

**May 29** - Heather Wilson

**May 18** - Rick & Lois Gallus (47 years)

**May 25** - Adam & Shelly Marsh (19 years)

**May 27** - Keith & Wendy Mayket (15 years)

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**About Our Members:**

DJ Shaffer passed away on May 11, 2021

Joseph Adamy passed away on May 13, 2021

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Pastor Scott and Congregation,

Thank you for your visits and for always keeping us in your prayers. It is very much appreciated.

With Love and Faith,

Pat & Jim Custer

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Thank you to everyone that came to help with the Weed and Feed. We had a great turn out; all the help was appreciated.

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

**Remember those that prayer has been requested:**

Linda Sell, Patti Finnegan, Richard Isaac Pentz, Michelle Roberts, Jill McEntee, Cissy, Cadence, Maxine Hale, Linda & Dick, Midge, Dolly & Chis Palm, David, Karen, Lauren, Billy, Colley Family, Miller Family, Shaffer Family, Patti Sliko, Steve, Sara Solarczyk, Mary Ann, and Adamy/Kunkle Family.

**NEW FINANCIAL UPDATE**

As anticipated, Mount Calvary's year-to-date finances turned for the better in the month of April. Financial gifts for the month were higher than during any other month over the last five years. 2020's Payroll Protection Program loan from the federal government was forgiven. There were also no unexpected expenses. We are now on course to meet the budget adopted at this year's congregational meeting. Unless an unexpected expenditure were to become necessary, it's time for all of us to maintain our present course; at least equaling last year's giving or increasing a bit when and where it's possible.

**CONDENSED WORSHIP FOR THE WEEKEND OF SUNDAY, MAY 16, 2021.**

**PRAYER OF THE DAY**

P: Gracious and glorious God, you have chosen us as your own, and by Christ's powerful name you protect us from evil. By your Spirit transform us and your beloved world, that we may find our joy in your Son, Jesus Christ, our Savior and Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever.

**A: Amen.**

## **FIRST READING: ACTS 1:15-17, 21-26**

*In the days between Jesus' ascension and Pentecost, Peter oversees the process whereby one of the members of the community of believers is chosen to be the twelfth apostle, in order to fill the vacancy created by Judas's treachery and death.*

<sup>15</sup>In those days Peter stood up among the believers (together the crowd numbered about one hundred twenty persons) and said, <sup>16</sup>"Friends, the scripture had to be fulfilled, which the Holy Spirit through David foretold concerning Judas, who became a guide for those who arrested Jesus—<sup>17</sup>for he was numbered among us and was allotted his share in this ministry." <sup>21</sup>So one of the men who have accompanied us during all the time that the Lord Jesus went in and out among us, <sup>22</sup>beginning from the baptism of John until the day when he was taken up from us—one of these must become a witness with us to his resurrection." <sup>23</sup>So they proposed two, Joseph called Barsabbas, who was also known as Justus, and Matthias. <sup>24</sup>Then they prayed and said, "Lord, you know everyone's heart. Show us which one of these two you have chosen <sup>25</sup>to take the place in this ministry and apostleship from which Judas turned aside to go to his own place." <sup>26</sup>And they cast lots for them, and the lot fell on Matthias; and he was added to the eleven apostles.

## **SECOND READING: 1 JOHN 5:9-13**

*God has borne witness to the gift of eternal life in Jesus Christ. Whoever believes in the Son of God believes in the witness of God and has the promise of eternal life.*

<sup>9</sup>If we receive human testimony, the testimony of God is greater; for this is the testimony of God that he has testified to his Son. <sup>10</sup>Those who believe in the Son of God have the testimony in their hearts. Those who do not believe in God have made him a liar by not believing in the testimony that God has given concerning his Son. <sup>11</sup>And this is the testimony: God gave us eternal life, and this life is in his Son. <sup>12</sup>Whoever has the Son has life; whoever does not have the Son of God does not have life.

<sup>13</sup>I write these things to you who believe in the name of the Son of God, so that you may know that you have eternal life.

## **GOSPEL: JOHN 17:6-19**

*In this reading the church hears Jesus' words on the night before his death—his prayer for his disciples and for all who would believe in him through their words.*

Jesus prayed: <sup>6</sup>"I have made your name known to those whom you gave me from the world. They were yours, and you gave them to me, and they have kept your word. <sup>7</sup>Now they know that everything you have given me is from you; <sup>8</sup>for the words that you gave to me I have given to them, and they have received them and know in truth that I came from you; and they have believed that you sent me. <sup>9</sup>I am asking on their behalf; I am not asking on behalf of the world, but on behalf of those whom you gave me, because they are yours. <sup>10</sup>All mine are yours, and yours are mine; and I have been glorified in them. <sup>11</sup>And now I am no longer in the world, but they are in the world, and I am coming to you. Holy Father, protect them in your name that you have given me, so that they may be one, as we are one. <sup>12</sup>While I was with them, I protected them in your name that you have given me. I guarded them, and not one of them was lost except the one destined to be lost, so that the scripture might be fulfilled. <sup>13</sup>But now I am coming to you, and I speak these things in the world so that they may have my joy made complete in themselves. <sup>14</sup>I have given them your word, and the world has hated them because they do not belong to the world, just as I do not belong to the world. <sup>15</sup>I am not asking you to take them out of the world, but I ask you to protect them from the evil one. <sup>16</sup>They do not belong to the world, just as I do not belong to the world. <sup>17</sup>Sanctify them in the truth; your word is truth. <sup>18</sup>As you have sent me into the

world, so I have sent them into the world. <sup>19</sup>And for their sakes I sanctify myself, so that they also may be sanctified in truth.”

### **SERMON BY PASTOR JONATHAN**

*Grace, mercy, and peace to you from Christ Jesus our Lord who prays for unity in love. Amen.*

“Holy Father, protect them in your name that you have given me, so that they may be one, as we are one.”

In our final week of the Easter season, our final week with Jesus before we shift our attention slightly toward the Holy Spirit in Pentecost, we are drawn back to the night on which he was betrayed. The night on which he joined together with the disciples in the Upper Room for a final time.

And in those moments, Jesus allowed them to eavesdrop on the prayer that he was lifting up to God in heaven, and in that moment, he prayed for one thing in particular...

Unity.

“Holy Father, protect them in your name that you have given me, so that they may be one, as we are one.” It’s almost as if he were saying, “Dear God, help my friends to find unity in their faith, so that they can share the same bond that you and I do.”

It makes you wonder whether Jesus knew all that laid ahead of the disciples, all the things that they might find to argue about in the days to come. All of the divisions that would form even in those earliest days of the church.

It makes you wonder whether Jesus knew that with each generation, the Christian church would become more and more splintered, as various groups broke off from one another over all sorts of disagreements big and small.

Certainly, he must have been known something, that in some of his final hours, in one of his last opportunities to pray without interruption, he prayed *not for himself*, but for his followers, that they would be one with God and one with each other.

It makes you wonder what Jesus would think if he saw the way the church was continuing to find ways to divide itself at this very moment. Maybe not here, but in places all over the world.

During seminary, my former college pastor, Matthew Riegel, who had then become the bishop of the West Virginia-Western Maryland Synod invited me to accompany him on a conflict mediation visit at one of the congregations he served. This particular congregation was largely made up of two distinct families, and people who chose sides between one or the other. For those familiar with Appalachian history, it certainly felt like the Hatfields and McCoys. Or maybe the Capulets and the Montagues if you’re more of a fan of Shakespeare.

These two families had become so embroiled in conflict that the other side seemingly could do no right. Overwhelmed, their pastor had resigned. And neither side trusted the other to handle the communion elements for fear that they might spit in them, or worse.

My job as I accompanied Bishop Riegel was to sit and take notes as an unbiased observer as one by one, twenty or so congregation members each received 15-20 minutes with the bishop to tell THEIR side of the story. The first two or three that we listened to all represented one side of the conflict, and as I listened it seemed pretty cut and dry. The other side was wrong. But then, when I heard the first person to tell that other side, it became obvious that this was not a simple disagreement. The truth was likely somewhere in the middle.

I went home that night sad for the people of that congregation, and sad for the church as a whole. To think that a church disagreement could become so heated that someone might have to fear whether the communion wine has been tampered with is simply heartbreaking.

Conflict exists everywhere, even within the church. And even in that particular situation, as an unbiased, neutral party, I couldn't help but relate to people on both sides of the issue. I couldn't help but feel pulled in two separate directions. I couldn't help but wish they all could come together around God's love.

I wonder if that's how Jesus felt. I wonder if that's what prompted him to pray that God would protect his disciples and help them to act as one, to have unity. He didn't want them to feel pulled apart, he wanted them to be together as God's children, together as God's beloved.

Jesus knew that they'd be faced with times where it felt like they were being pulled between their faith and all the other powers of the world.

And he wanted them to be strong. Strong for the sake of the Gospel.

And in times of division in the church, and in the world as a whole. Our strength IS the Gospel. Our connection to all the other Christians throughout all of time and space is our unity in God's love.

Next Sunday, we will celebrate Pentecost and we will hear stories of the Holy Spirit descending upon those earliest disciples, empowering them to do the work of the Gospel in the world. We'll hear how people from all different countries were able to hear the Good News in their own language. Unity, in the midst of chaos.

I wonder if Jesus knew that things might get worse before they got better. That there would have to be more division before there could ever truly be unity.

And so, in these chaotic days, we follow Jesus' example and pray for unity throughout the church and throughout the world, and we put our trust in the promise that God will make all things new in the last day.

Thanks be to God. Amen.

1. One Love. 2. "Holy Father..." 3. "Unity..." 4. The Great Schism 5. Jesus Praying 6. Bakersville (3 clicks).  
7. Truth in the Middle 8. Pulled Apart 9. Jesus Weeps 10. Love Tree. 11. Chaos>Order

### **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: Holy God, in Christ Jesus the joy of the church is made complete. Root the church in your Word and unify us as Christ's body. Send us into the world as your loving people, ready to testify to your Spirit at work. Hear us, O God.

**A: Your mercy is great.**

P: Mighty God, the world is your handiwork, displaying your creative impulse. Seas teem with life, forests reach up to praise you, and the mystery of life lies deep in the soil. Guard and keep this world for the well-being of all your creatures. Hear us, O God.

**A: Your mercy is great.**

P: Gracious Sovereign, those who follow your ways are like trees planted near streams of water. Establish the leaders of nations and all in authority in your grace and truth. Strengthen them, so that the people they serve will have abundant life. Hear us, O God.

**A: Your mercy is great.**

P: Generous Savior, you befriend those who are sick, suffering, poor, lonely, outcast, rejected, or sick. Grant healing and love to all in need (especially). Give them tangible signs of your steadfast love. Hear us, O God.

**A: Your mercy is great.**

P: Creator God, here in this community we share the gift of praying, learning, and supporting one another. Give us thankful hearts as we claim the gifts that are unique to us and keep us from being envious of others with different gifts. Hear us, O God.

**A: Your mercy is great.**

P: Saving God, your wonderful promise is the gift of eternal life in Jesus. Through the witness of those who have died in you, strengthen us now in this gift of life. We cherish the memory of your saints (especially). 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.**