



# Mount Calvary Connected

June 17, 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

When I last wrote my column here for you all two weeks ago, I wasn't sure I'd be around to write another one. But the Adams family is still on "baby watch," with my wife Bekah being scheduled to be admitted to Conemaugh Hospital on Monday morning the 21<sup>st</sup> if we're not there before then. After that, I plan to be away from the office for about a month and a half as I help our new addition get settled in at home. But in the meantime, we're just waiting.

It occurs to me that some of the best stories in scripture deal with people patiently (and maybe sometimes impatiently) waiting for good news and the fulfillment of God's promise. In Genesis, you have Abraham waiting for his promised heir and Joseph waiting to be released from prison after being sold into slavery by his brothers; Exodus tells us of the Israelites waiting to be freed from Egypt, and then waiting for God to show them the way out of the dessert; we know that Job waited patiently to be relieved from his suffering and trials; and we know that the people of God waited for generations for the promised Messiah in the form of Jesus Christ.

I say these are some of the "best" stories in scripture, because in every case, the thing they were waiting for eventually came to fruition. Patience and faith were rewarded.

I can be incredibly patient, but I'd be lying if I said that waiting doesn't give me anxiety; sometimes you just want the good thing to be here, now!

The past fifteen months has been a massive exercise in patience and faith, and yet, here we are, with our patience and faith being rewarded. People are still getting sick, but in far fewer numbers; we still need to be cautious, but not nearly as restrictively as we had been at various points during the height of COVID. We're still not quite out of the wilderness, but we're the closest we've been to normal in a very long time. It's yet another reminder of the ways in which God can provide when we have patience and faith.

I wanted to finish by sharing the lyrics of a hymn, but in searching for them I stumbled upon a contemporary Christian song by a man named James Wilson that seemed even more appropriate:

*"There's not a mountain too tall, There's not a problem too small, That Jesus can't resolve. In time, He'll get involved, Our God He cares about us."*

*So wait on the Lord, Wait on the Lord, Wait on the Lord, And He'll renew your strength.*

*There's not a light too dark, A journey too long to embark, Jesus will see you through. In time He'll make you new, Our God He cares about us, So wait on..."*

And so, we wait on...

Yours in Patience & Faith, Pastor Jono

## **We Continue the Transition!**

Masks are now optional for those who have been vaccinated. We have returned to singing during in-person services, along with normal communion distribution.

For those who are not yet ready to return to in-person worship, 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)

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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 Meetings**

WELCA will meet on **Monday, June 21 at 6:00 pm.**

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### **Flowers**

In honor of the McQuaide and Middleton children and grandchildren.

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



Join us on Saturdays, July 17<sup>th</sup> and August 21<sup>st</sup> 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.

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### **Backyard Cookie Collection will be Thursday, July 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!

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### **Birthdays and Anniversaries for the Week: June 20 - June 26, 2021**

**June 20** – Nathaniel Davis, Patrick Kishlock, Gayle Swartz

**June 21** – Beth Pruchnic

**June 22** – Anna Bower, Ellenore Colvin, Jennifer Nash, Dustin Newman,  
James Pozun II, Jessica Sann, Elaine Sterner, Nicole Wingard

**June 23** – Kirsten Barkley Pam Bittner, Pat Bittner, Tyler Brown, Brenda Punako,  
Rebecca Ross, Linda Warmkessel, Jay Zimmerman

**June 24** – Amy Brandau, Willard Colvin, Wyatt George

**June 25** – Cliff Goddard

**June 26** – Murphy Cononie, Chris Magliocca, Steven McQuaide, Lauren Wiley, Edward Wingard III

**June 20** – Jeffrey & Phyllis Nider (34 years)  
**June 23** - Stephen & Laura Bower (14 years), Paul & Stacy Pollino (4 years)  
**June 25** - Donald & Carol Sauter (39 years)

#### About Our Members:

Patti Sliko has home hospice care.  
Jill McEntee is home from the hospital.

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Dear Mt. Calvary Lutheran Church,  
Thank you so much for the graduation gift! I read the back of "Faith in Action", and it looks so good! I will definitely be reading it this summer, with my new blanket! It means so much that I have such a warm family at Mt. Calvary!  
Thank you again!  
Love, Kadiya Lingenfelter

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Congratulations to proud parents, Brittany & Ray Buhler and big sister Everly on the birth of a baby girl, Wrenna, born June 11th. Grandparents are Brian and Lori Hiltz and Great-grandparent, is Wilma Hiltz.

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Thank you so much to all my Mt. Calvary friends for the lovely cards for my move to my new home and especially for my 102nd birthday. I really appreciated reading all the lovely cards. Jayne Dunbar

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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 & Dick, Midge, Dolly & Chis Palm, David, Karen, Lauren, Billy, Colley Family, Miller Family, Shaffer Family, Steve, Sara Solarczyk, Mary Ann, Adamy/Kunkle Family, Debbie Finnegan, Claudia Plows, Patti Finnegan, Jill McEntee, Maxine Hale, Patti Sliko, Lori, Janis Pozun, Bob & Janet, and Jennifer.

#### JUNE FINANCIAL UPDATE

Through the end of May, Mount Calvary remained in the black. Income is tracking slightly ahead of budget. Expenses are tracking slightly over budget, with the impact of seasonal, weather-related bills responsible for the overage. If we all continue to do our part, giving extra when possible and holding steady when it's not, things should continue as they presently are.

#### CONDENSED WORSHIP FOR THE WEEKEND OF SUNDAY, JUNE 13, 2021.

#### PRAYER OF THE DAY

P: O God, you are the tree of life, offering shelter to all the world. Graft us into yourself and nurture our growth, that we may bear your truth and love to those in need, through Jesus Christ, our Savior and Lord.

A: Amen.

#### FIRST READING: 1 SAMUEL 15:34--16:13

*Saul, anointed by the prophet Samuel as the first king of Israel, displeases the LORD. The LORD therefore sends Samuel to Bethlehem, where he anoints David, the youngest of the sons of Jesse, to succeed Saul as king.*

<sup>34</sup>Samuel went to Ramah; and Saul went up to his house in Gibeah of Saul. <sup>35</sup>Samuel did not see Saul again until the day of his death, but Samuel grieved over Saul. And the LORD was sorry that he had made Saul king

over Israel.

<sup>16:1</sup>The LORD said to Samuel, “How long will you grieve over Saul? I have rejected him from being king over Israel. Fill your horn with oil and set out; I will send you to Jesse the Bethlehemite, for I have provided for myself a king among his sons.” <sup>2</sup>Samuel said, “How can I go? If Saul hears of it, he will kill me.” And the LORD said, “Take a heifer with you, and say, ‘I have come to sacrifice to the LORD.’ <sup>3</sup>Invite Jesse to the sacrifice, and I will show you what you shall do; and you shall anoint for me the one whom I name to you.” <sup>4</sup>Samuel did what the LORD commanded, and came to Bethlehem. The elders of the city came to meet him trembling, and said, “Do you come peaceably?” <sup>5</sup>He said, “Peaceably; I have come to sacrifice to the LORD; sanctify yourselves and come with me to the sacrifice.” And he sanctified Jesse and his sons and invited them to the sacrifice.

<sup>6</sup>When they came, he looked on Eliab and thought, “Surely the LORD’s anointed is now before the LORD.” <sup>7</sup>But the LORD said to Samuel, “Do not look on his appearance or on the height of his stature, because I have rejected him; for the LORD does not see as mortals see; they look on the outward appearance, but the LORD looks on the heart.” <sup>8</sup>Then Jesse called Abinadab, and made him pass before Samuel. He said, “Neither has the LORD chosen this one.” <sup>9</sup>Then Jesse made Shammah pass by. And he said, “Neither has the LORD chosen this one.” <sup>10</sup>Jesse made seven of his sons pass before Samuel, and Samuel said to Jesse, “The LORD has not chosen any of these.” <sup>11</sup>Samuel said to Jesse, “Are all your sons here?” And he said, “There remains yet the youngest, but he is keeping the sheep.” And Samuel said to Jesse, “Send and bring him; for we will not sit down until he comes here.” <sup>12</sup>He sent and brought him in. Now he was ruddy, and had beautiful eyes, and was handsome. The LORD said, “Rise and anoint him; for this is the one.” <sup>13</sup>Then Samuel took the horn of oil, and anointed him in the presence of his brothers; and the spirit of the LORD came mightily upon David from that day forward. Samuel then set out and went to Ramah.

## **PSALM 20**

P: May the LORD answer you in the day of trouble, the name of the God of Jacob defend you;

**A: send you help from the sanctuary and strengthen you out of Zion;**

P: may the LORD remember all your offerings and accept your burnt sacrifice;

**A: grant you your heart’s desire and prosper all your plans.**

P: We will shout for joy at your victory and unfurl our banners in the name of our God; may the LORD grant all your requests.

**A: Now I know that the LORD gives victory to the anointed one; God will answer out of the holy heaven, gaining victory with a strong right hand.**

P: Some trust in chariots and some in horses, but we rely on the name of the LORD our God.

**A: They collapse and fall down, but we will arise and stand upright.**

P: O LORD, give victory to the king and answer us when we call.

## **SECOND READING: 2 CORINTHIANS 5:6-17**

*Paul encourages believers to live by faith and not by sight. We do not consider Jesus from a human perspective but through the eyes of faith, believing he died for all and was raised. All who are in Christ are now in God’s new creation.*

<sup>6</sup>So we are always confident; even though we know that while we are at home in the body we are away from the Lord—<sup>7</sup>for we walk by faith, not by sight. <sup>8</sup>Yes, we do have confidence, and we would rather be away

from the body and at home with the Lord. <sup>9</sup>So whether we are at home or away, we make it our aim to please him. <sup>10</sup>For all of us must appear before the judgment seat of Christ, so that each may receive recompense for what has been done in the body, whether good or evil.

<sup>11</sup>Therefore, knowing the fear of the Lord, we try to persuade others; but we ourselves are well known to God, and I hope that we are also well known to your consciences. <sup>12</sup>We are not commanding ourselves to you again, but giving you an opportunity to boast about us, so that you may be able to answer those who boast in outward appearance and not in the heart. <sup>13</sup>For if we are beside ourselves, it is for God; if we are in our right mind, it is for you. <sup>14</sup>For the love of Christ urges us on, because we are convinced that one has died for all; therefore all have died. <sup>15</sup>And he died for all, so that those who live might live no longer for themselves, but for him who died and was raised for them.

<sup>16</sup>From now on, therefore, we regard no one from a human point of view; even though we once knew Christ from a human point of view, we know him no longer in that way. <sup>17</sup>So if anyone is in Christ, there is a new creation: everything old has passed away; see, everything has become new!

#### **GOSPEL: MARK 4:26-34**

*Jesus frequently uses parables to teach ordinary people as they are able to hear and understand. Images of sowing and growing show the vitality of God's kingdom.*

<sup>26</sup>Jesus said, "The kingdom of God is as if someone would scatter seed on the ground,<sup>27</sup>and would sleep and rise night and day, and the seed would sprout and grow, he does not know how. <sup>28</sup>The earth produces of itself, first the stalk, then the head, then the full grain in the head. <sup>29</sup>But when the grain is ripe, at once he goes in with his sickle, because the harvest has come."

<sup>30</sup>He also said, "With what can we compare the kingdom of God, or what parable will we use for it? <sup>31</sup>It is like a mustard seed, which, when sown upon the ground, is the smallest of all the seeds on earth; <sup>32</sup>yet when it is sown it grows up and becomes the greatest of all shrubs, and puts forth large branches, so that the birds of the air can make nests in its shade."

<sup>33</sup>With many such parables he spoke the word to them, as they were able to hear it; <sup>34</sup>he did not speak to them except in parables, but he explained everything in private to his disciples.

#### **SERMON BY PASTOR JONATHAN**

When my older brother Josh got tired of working in the emergency room, as he had for several years during the first part of his career as a nurse, he took a job in the neonatal intensive care unit...

Since I was in high school at the time, I didn't really pay much attention to what it was he actually did in the NICU, that is, until a few years later when his first daughter was born premature. When I went to visit my new niece in the hospital, I remember having to scrub my hands and arms for several minutes like a surgeon, before being buzzed into a room filled with tiny babies in incubators, and a stop light connected to some sort of sound meter to indicate when it was too loud.

This was the place where my niece was, but it was also the place my brother worked, taking care of the sickest of the sick, and the tiniest of the tiny.

And maybe more than anything, I remember the motto of one of the doctors who worked there with him: "the best cure for being small, is getting big."

While my wife and I are blessed with big babies, all three of my brother's daughters spent some amount of time in the NICU, their middle daughter having been born at 27 weeks. She's seven years old now, still small for her age, but brilliant and compassionate and amazing.

But I'd be lying if I said she didn't occasionally get upset that her five-year-old sister and three year old cousin can just about trade clothes with her.

There are advantages to being big. Things like not having to ask help to reach things high up on the shelf. For businesses, being big often means greater efficiency, and lower costs. As I set out on the task of buying cases of bottled water and Gatorade for first responders earlier this week, it was no surprise that I found the best prices at BIG stores like Sam's Club and Walmart.

But being big isn't all it's cracked up to be. Take Robert Wadlow, for example, Guinness World Records gave him the title of tallest man ever, measuring in at 8ft 11inches. But his height was the result of a pituitary issue that caused other medical problems, his body could not support itself. When he died in 1940, it was the result of a septic infection, stemming from a sore, that was caused by the braces he used to walk. Being big, is more or less what killed him.

Being big can cause issues. It can cause you to lose sight of what really matters. It can cause you to think that big is good, and small is bad; even though in our hearts, we know that's not the truth.

Consider the story of Jesus' birth. God didn't enter into human form as a strong and powerful king leading the largest nation in the world. NO, God became human through a newborn baby, born to young unwed parents, in a place set aside for animals, in the middle of a small backwoods town. Jesus' birth was small, without a lot of fanfare or flourish, but the event that it represented, God incarnate in man, was impossibly huge.

Small things aren't always as small as they look. Sometimes they're bigger on the inside. Like the Tardis, or, you know a mustard seed. The tiniest of seeds that grows into the largest of trees.

Jesus is speaking in parables. In fact, the Gospel of Mark tells us at the end of today's reading that parables were the ONLY way he taught at this point in time, and that he would only explain them to the disciples in private after the fact. Maybe he's feeling a bit more reserved after being chastised like we heard in last week's Gospel.

But the why isn't as important as the what... All of these parables without direct explanations means that we as modern-day disciples need to do a bit more of our own pondering to determine just what Jesus is saying to the church.

And in my pondering, I truly think that Jesus is extolling the virtue of smallness.

His inner circle was small, and the disciples themselves were the sorts of people that might be considered small, too: laborers, fishermen, tax collectors. They weren't members of high society. He hand-picked his small crew of small men and built from there.

Several times in my life, I've worked with organizations that have forgotten what it's like to be small, and they begin to struggle. They're weighed down by the memory of being big and can't move forward. But when they focus back on being small, on starting from scratch, on doing things the way they would if they were a fraction of the size, they begin to gain momentum, and things begin moving forward again.

Sometimes in life, and in the church, we can become too big for our own britches, in our Old Testament reading, we get the impression that may be part of the issue with Saul, he's overzealous, and the people who wanted him appointed as king had lost sight of the most important things, they had asked to go against God's will for them, they had lost their unity and their vision.

I think these parables of Jesus are an important instruction for us to avoid a similar fate... Don't undervalue the importance of things that are small: everything has to start somewhere, and extraordinary growth can take place in such a small amount of time.

The best cure for being small is getting big, but you HAVE to be small in order to grow. That's just common sense.

Here at Mt.Calvary/Benscreek, we've been blessed in many ways with some amount of bigness, but in so many ways, we are also small. There is still so much potential for growth, for new starts, and that's exactly what we are, every single day.

We are sowing seed, hoping to find new growth, but at the same time, we are the soil that seed has been planted in, it's our job to nurture it, to help it bear fruit.

When we think small, we can re-find the same sort of values and mission that Jesus gave to the first disciples, and which have been passed down to us. This parable reminds us that it is not the size that is important but what comes from it. It is not the size of the seed that is important, but what counts – in God's eyes – is the quality of God's love that we can spread among each other and into the wider community. Amen.

### **PRAYERS OF INTERCESSION**

P: Let us come before the triune God in prayer.

P: Holy God, you plant the seeds of faith in every nation. Enliven your church, so that the good news of your grace may root and grow throughout the world. Lord, in your mercy, **A: hear our prayer.**

P: Creator, even the trees, shrubs, and flowers delight in your goodness. From the depths of the soil to the highest mountain, bring forth new plants. Restore growth to places suffering drought. Lord, in your mercy,

**A: hear our prayer.**

P: Judge of nations, we pray for our leaders and those in power. Grant them the ability to regard those under their charge with humility, dedicating their lives in service to others. Lord, in your mercy,

**A: hear our prayer.**

P: Divine comforter, you show compassion to those in need and provide relief to those who call on you. Bless all who suffer, especially people trapped in cycles of poverty and homelessness. Lord, in your mercy,

**A: hear our prayer.**

P: Sovereign God, this house of worship belongs to you. We give thanks and pray for our church musician(s). We dedicate to you the joyful noise that comes from this place; the cries of children, the melody of voice and instruments, and the songs from our hearts. Lord, in your mercy, **A: hear our prayer.**

P: Eternal God, we give thanks for our ancestors in the faith who are now at home with you (*especially*). We look forward to that day when we are reunited in your new creation. Lord, in your mercy,

**A: hear our prayer.**

P: Lord Jesus, thanks for being with last week's synod assembly. Bless Bishop-elect Paula Schmitt and equip her for the office to which she has been called. As we give thanks for outgoing Bishop Michael Rhyne, bless he and his family as they transition to whatever shall be next for them. Lord in your mercy, **A: hear our prayer.**

P: We lift our prayers to you, O God, trusting in your abiding grace.

**A: Amen.**