



Mount Calvary Connected

January 20, 2022

Mount Calvary Connected is a weekly newsletter sent out at the end of each week. Our goal is to keep you connected to your church and your faith with messages from our pastors, information about upcoming activities at Mt. Calvary and more!

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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 also stream these services live over the internet. Simply visit www.mt-calvarylutheran.org and click "Live Radio Broadcast" from the home page on Sunday mornings.

Weekly worship bulletins can be found at: www.mt-calvarylutheran.org/bulletins/

“We Need to Talk About the Weather”

By Tish Harrison Warren, Anglican Priest and Writer

The nation is coming apart. The world is in turmoil. We need to chat about the weather.

I mean this sincerely...

“We are dealing with a spiritual and moral sickness,” (David French) writes. “Malice and disdain are conditions of the soul.”

To learn how to love our neighbors we need cultural habits that allow us to share in our common humanity. We need quiet, daily practices that rebuild social trust. And we need seemingly pointless conversation with those around us.

The great urban activist Jane Jacobs wrote about the social function of casual conversations and interactions: greeting your grocer, passing a pleasantry with a neighbor, playing peekaboo with a toddler at the crosswalk.

“Most of it is utterly trivial,” she wrote in 1961’s “The Death and Life of Great American Cities,” “but the sum is not trivial at all.”

“The sum of such casual, public contact at a local level,” she continued, “is a feeling for the public identity of a people, a web of public respect and trust.”

She said that the absence of this trust is a “disaster” to a city. We can scale that up to a state, then to a nation. And here we are.

My greatest example of the magic of trivial conversation came from my late father. He was named “funniest-friendliest person” by the local newspaper in the small Texas county I was born in. Really. That’s a real award. My dad had friends across the political spectrum. He saw a person’s ability to find a moment of levity — a laugh about the Aggie vs. Longhorn rivalry — as more important than the person’s political affiliation. He saw the demonization of your political opponents as a character flaw, not a mark of purity or passion.

It wasn’t that he didn’t think politics mattered — he lectured me on the importance of voting. He simply thought that cordiality and the civil trust it engenders mattered more. Granted, he’d never use the words “cordiality” or “civil trust.” He’d call it not taking yourself too seriously and being a good neighbor. As a kid, I watched him perform some kind of daily alchemy, building bridges with simple conversations, crossing racial, political and ideological lines while checking his mail or depositing a check. He called forth a mutual humanity between people. It astonished me then and now.

I see moments of this in my own life. I moved states recently and feel the loss of seemingly unimportant local relationships I’d built where we lived before. I have no idea if my favorite former barista and I shared any political or ideological beliefs. We likely disagree on important issues. But I don’t care. I know he adores his infant niece and I regularly asked how she was doing. He is working to get through grad school, and I found myself genuinely rooting for this person I barely knew.

Each of us is more than the sum of our political and religious beliefs. We each have complex relationships with the people we love. We each have bodies that get sick, that enjoy good tacos or the turning of fall. We like certain movies or music. We laugh at how babies sound when they sneeze. We hurt when we skin a knee. The way we form humanizing, nonthreatening interactions around these things taps into something real about us. We are three-dimensional people who are textured, interesting, ordinary and lovely.

The consequences of a breakdown of social trust are political, making it possible for large amounts of people to think political difference may necessitate secession. But they are also spiritual and emotional. A 2020 Pew study found, “The less interpersonal trust people have, the more frequently they experience bouts of anxiety, depression and loneliness.” Neglecting small talk doesn’t only make us hate each other more; it also makes us unhappy with our lives.

Of course, to heal the deep divisions in our society we need profound political and systemic change. But though we need more than just small talk, we certainly do not need less than that. As a culture, our conversations can run so quickly to what divides us, and this is all the more true online. We cannot build a culture of peace and justice if we can’t talk with our neighbors. It’s in these many small conversations where we begin to recognize the familiar humanity in one another. These are the baby steps of learning to live together across differences.

As we rebuild our ordinary lives again as Covid recedes, one of the first and most important things we need to re-establish is a habit of talking with those around us about nothing that will ever be considered a hot take. There is a profound political and spiritual need to see our ideological opponents

as, first and foremost, humans like us. The future of American society really does depend on two people who believe wildly different things having the ability to have a pleasant conversation about the weather and walk away with the feeling that they are each a little less alone.

Adult Sunday School

Adult Sunday School is ongoing! We were happy to see some new faces and hope that even more join us! We meet in the conference room/library each Sunday after worship.

Upcoming Meetings

Council: Tuesday, January 25th at 6:30 p.m.

Executive Committee: Thursday, January 27th at 6:30 p.m. (at Benscreek Lutheran)

Property Committee: Tuesday, February 1st at 6:30 p.m.

Evangelism Committee: Thursday, February 3rd at 6:30 p.m.

Home Communion and Visitation Team: First week of February (TBD)

All Parish Committee: Tuesday, February 8th at 6:30 p.m.

Social Ministry Committee: Thursday, February 17th at 6:30 p.m.

Annual Meeting

Mt. Calvary's Annual Meeting will occur on Saturday, February 5th following the 5:30 p.m. worship service. Please plan to attend.

Annual reports for current voting members of the congregation are now available at church in the narthex. If you are a current voting member, please pick up your copy before or after worship, from 9-1 p.m. on Monday through Thursday, or by making special arrangements with the church secretary. According to the congregation's constitution, current voting members are confirmed members who have communed with the congregation and made a contribution of record to the congregation in the current or prior year.

2022 Offering Envelopes

Offering envelopes for 2022 are now available in the narthex. Thank you in advance for your contribution!

Help Wanted

The Property Committee is looking to recruit a number of small job volunteers. Tasks might include replacing light bulbs, changing hardware on a commode, getting a lawnmower or snowblower ready for use, etc. The Committee believes we have a lot of talent in the congregation and wants to make greater use of it. Every small job handled by a member equals one less call that needs to be made to a vendor who may have a minimum visit charge or an hourly rate of \$50 or more.

Interested parties should contact Mark Rychak or one of the pastors. A message could also be left with the church office at 814-266-4859. Thank you!

Scheduled Worship Help

Saturday, January 22:

Greeters/Ushers: Mark & Debbie Rychak

Communion Assistants: Pam Bittner & Cindy Solarczyk

Sunday, January 23:

Greeters/Ushers: Todd Moss & Ray Leverknight

Communion Assistants: Volunteers needed!

Saturday, January 29:

Greeters/Ushers: Mark & Debbie Rychak

Communion Assistants: Cindy Buday & Missy Brodt

Sunday, January 30:

Greeters/Ushers: Volunteers needed!

Communion Assistants: Ray Leverknight

There are sign up sheets in the Narthex for Greeters/Ushers and Communion Assistants. Please sign up for the dates that would suit you best. We appreciate you volunteering. If you have questions about these roles, please contact Christine Koshute at [814-421-4921](tel:814-421-4921) or Chris Oleksa at [814-244-9851](tel:814-244-9851).



Youth News

Sunday School is ongoing for Pre-K through 8th grade: "Mount Calvary Kid's Crew" is our program for Pre-K and up that gathers at 8:30am in Sander Hall with Pastor Jonathan. Students focus on a bible story and have an activity or craft before rejoining their parents during the worship service.

Childcare is now available during Sunday morning worship: Hannah Salamon is a Richland Learning Center staff member who will be joining us each Sunday along with Pastor Jonathan and other volunteers to provide childcare for infants through age 5. For the time being, drop-off for this service will take place in Sander Hall. Speak with Pastor Jonathan for more information.

Snow Camp 2022: Snow camp is BACK at Sequanota! Plans are in the works for the annual "snow camp" to return to Camp Sequanota on February 25th & 26th. This is an overnight event for youth in 6th through 12th grade. Registration opens January 15th, and we'd love to have a group. Contact Pastor Jonathan for details!

Junior/Senior High Lock-In: We're beginning to plan an overnight "lock-in" sleepover event for junior and senior high youth in January or February of 2022. If you have students in this age group, watch for information from Pastor Jonathan as we try to identify the best possible weekend for this event!

Pastor Jonathan LOVES to get out and see our Mount Calvary youth in action doing the things they enjoy! Be sure to share your schedules for sports, concerts, recitals, etc. You never know where he might show up!

Pastor Jonathan's office hours at Mount Calvary are Mondays & Wednesdays, 10am-3pm. He is available outside of those hours via email (RevJonoAdams@gmail.com), cellphone (412-817-6704), or Facebook.

Giving Tree

A total of \$601 was collected from the Giving Tree for September-November and was donated to Nardecchia Spay and Neuter. Donations will now be given to The Helping Hands Mission in Portage through February. Thank you for your continued support!

Committee News

The Nominating Committee appointed by council in August has completed its nominating ballot for council. The committee's nominees are Kevin Oleksa (1st three-year term), Mark Rychak, (2nd three-year term), Judi Stinebiser (1st three-year term after completing remainder of somebody else's term), and Jack Weisbrodt, (1st three-year term after completing remainder of somebody else's term).

Below is some biographical info for each nominee:

Kevin Oleksa – Serving in various position, I have been with OTS, Inc, a computer and network company. for over 30 years. I have been owner of OTS since 2003. I am originally from the East Conemaugh section of Johnstown but have lived now with my wife Chris in Richland since 2006. Both Chris and I have attended Mt. Calvary for approximately 4 years with 2+ years of that being full time members. I bring to the table not only 15+ years business ownership experience but also service on several Boards of Directors for nonprofit organizations in the area like the Greater Johnstown YMCA and Allegheny Unlimited Care Providers (AUCP) for over 20 years. My knowledge of organizational strategy from a board level would be a help to Mt. Calvary.

Mark Rychak – I have been asked, and am happy to serve a second term on council. Deb and I were married by Pastor Brandau in what is now Sander Hall 38 years ago and have been members ever since. As the Holy Spirit grew in us, so did our commitment to our church through our time and talents. We have been blessed throughout the years in many ways. I have worked in the construction field for most of my adult life and I enjoy the many challenges that maintaining a building like Mt. Calvary can pose. I am honored that my company was chosen to build our new sanctuary in 1992. All businesses and organizations have been “through the ringer” in the last couple of years with the pandemic and I have enjoyed working with the entire council to work through these difficult times.

Judy Stinebiser – Hi my name is Judy Stinebiser. I have been a member of Mt. Calvary Church for 50 years. I have served on council for one year, without missing any meetings. It has been an honor and a pleasure to serve on council, and a great experience. The members of council have accomplished a lot this past year to improve the church, and make it a safer place to worship God. I would be glad and happy to be able to serve on council for three years.

Jack Weisbrodt – I'm proud to say I'm a lifelong member of Mt Calvary, dating back to the 50's with Pastor Sander. My parents, who have been deceased for over 30 years, were also members and they too were very active, serving on different committees. My father had also served on council and was a

member of the choir, and often performed solos. Unfortunately, he didn't pass down the singing gene! This is my second time on council. I served under Pastor Reed too. It was an exciting time, as I participated in the groundbreaking for the new sanctuary. And it's an exciting time now with Pastor Scott. He has worked tirelessly to make our church "better". It's great to see all the new members and even greater to see them get involved and serve in different ways. We've got a good thing going, and I'm proud to be part of it!

ELCA Good Gifts

ELCA Good Gifts is a great opportunity to provide critical support to the ministries and programs of the ELCA in nearly 80 countries around the world.

How it works:

- Choose a gift (food, medical care costs, school supplies, etc.)
- Receive a card to share the news of your gift
- Make a difference in someone's life!

Visit goodgifts.elca.org for more information on how to donate!

Birthdays and Anniversaries for the Week: January 23 – January 29, 2022

Jan. 23 - Carly Colvin, Emily Horn, & Ronald Wilson

Jan. 24 - Amy Mattes & Sharon Spinazzola

Jan. 25 - Austin Artim, Lauren Rose, & Jacob Urban

Jan. 26 - Pamela Grzybicki, Larry Hockensmith, Kadya Kobal, Hailea Morningstar, & Tyler Schellhammer

Jan. 27 - David Carney, Jr., Beverly Coughenour, Margaret Diehl, Phillip Elliot, Brian Harshberger, Ronald Punako, Jr., and Audrey Ritko

Jan. 28 - Heather Bivona, Tanya Bivona, Doris Loftis, and Paula Popp

Jan. 29 - Miriam Horner

Jan. 28 - Dustin & Melissa Pringle

Remember those that prayer has been requested for:

Jennifer & Ryan, Linda & Dick, Dolly & Chiz Palm, Claudia Plows, Maddie Pierce, Gladys Haupt, Maria, Bill & Linda, Jose & Family, Dave, Tom, Lt. Hunter Bergman, and Lt. Dylan Merchant, Harold, Rick, Midge, Shirley, Jennifer, Debbie, Jill McEntee, David, Lauren, Billy, Barb, Sara Solarczyk, Jackie Janak, Jack, Corinne, Joan, Dan, Natalie Zerby, Pastor Scott Custead, Luella Koontz, Al Lindner and Family, Bob, Dawn, Stacy & Josh, Florence Barker, Bob Trotter, Jean Pellon, Bill Layton, Deb Zilch, Bennett, Cassy Sojak, Paul Miller, Keith Mayket, Ruth, Pete, Annabelle, the Teplitz Family, Ethel Warshel, Melanie, Ken, John Nerone, Dane Wisner, Jeff, Don, Bill, Linda, Landon, Dorothy, Irene, Karen, Susan Dyers, Bob McMullen, Dwayne Dietrich, Wyatt George, Larry Hockensmith, Jean Pellon, Mike, Corey, and John Rychak.

Financial Update

Mount Calvary continues to do well financially. After nearly two years of a worldwide pandemic, we have been incredibly fortunate. Thank you! Thank you! Thank you! What remains for 2021 is to finish

with a strong December which has traditionally been our strongest month of the year. As for 2022, maintaining current levels of support and increasing support where and when it's possible will continue to be important. Though we still have many, many blessings to count, we are not as well-endowed as other congregations and the age and population decline of our community continue to present ongoing stewardship challenges. But thanks to you, we've overcome all of this thus far. Thank you!

Thank you! Thank you!

Condensed Worship for Sunday, January 16, 2022

Prayer of the Day

Lord God, source of every blessing, you showed forth your glory and led many to faith by the works of your Son, who brought gladness and salvation to his people. Transform us by the Spirit of his love, that we may find our life together in him, Jesus Christ, our Savior and Lord. **Amen.**

First Reading: Isaiah 62:1-5

For Zion's sake I will not keep silent, and for Jerusalem's sake I will not rest, until her vindication shines out like the dawn, and her salvation like a burning torch. The nations shall see your vindication, and all the kings your glory; and you shall be called by a new name that the mouth of the Lord will give. You shall be a crown of beauty in the hand of the Lord, and a royal diadem in the hand of your God. You shall no more be termed Forsaken, and your land shall no more be termed Desolate; but you shall be called My Delight Is in Her, and your land Married; for the Lord delights in you, and your land shall be married. For as a young man marries a young woman, so shall your builder marry you, and as the bridegroom rejoices over the bride, so shall your God rejoice over you.

P: The word of the Lord,

A: Thanks be to God!

Psalm 36:5-10

P: Your love, O Lord, reaches to the heavens, and your faithfulness to the clouds.

A: Your righteousness is like the strong mountains, your justice like the great deep; you save humankind and animals, O Lord.

P: How priceless is your love, O God! All people take refuge under the shadow of your wings.

A: They feast upon the abundance of your house; you give them drink from the river of your delights.

P: For with you is the well of life, and in your light we see light.

A: Continue your lovingkindness to those who know you, and your favor to those who are true of heart.

Second Reading: 1 Corinthians 12:1-11

Now concerning spiritual gifts, brothers and sisters, I do not want you to be uninformed. You know that when you were pagans, you were enticed and led astray to idols that could not speak. Therefore I want you to understand that no one speaking by the Spirit of God ever says "Let Jesus be cursed!" and no one can say "Jesus is Lord" except by the Holy Spirit. Now there are varieties of gifts, but the same Spirit; and there are varieties of services, but the same Lord; and there are varieties of activities, but it

is the same God who activates all of them in everyone. To each is given the manifestation of the Spirit for the common good. To one is given through the Spirit the utterance of wisdom, and to another the utterance of knowledge according to the same Spirit, to another faith by the same Spirit, to another gifts of healing by the one Spirit, to another the working of miracles, to another prophecy, to another the discernment of spirits, to another various kinds of tongues, to another the interpretation of tongues. All these are activated by one and the same Spirit, who allots to each one individually just as the Spirit chooses.

P: The word of the Lord,

A: Thanks be to God!

Gospel: John 2:1-11

On the third day there was a wedding in Cana of Galilee, and the mother of Jesus was there. Jesus and his disciples had also been invited to the wedding. When the wine gave out, the mother of Jesus said to him, "They have no wine." And Jesus said to her, "Woman, what concern is that to you and to me? My hour has not yet come." His mother said to the servants, "Do whatever he tells you." Now standing there were six stone water jars for the Jewish rites of purification, each holding twenty or thirty gallons. Jesus said to them, "Fill the jars with water." And they filled them up to the brim. He said to them, "Now draw some out, and take it to the chief steward." So they took it. When the steward tasted the water that had become wine, and did not know where it came from (though the servants who had drawn the water knew), the steward called the bridegroom and said to him, "Everyone serves the good wine first, and then the inferior wine after the guests have become drunk. But you have kept the good wine until now." Jesus did this, the first of his signs, in Cana of Galilee, and revealed his glory; and his disciples believed in him.

P: The gospel of the Lord.

A: Praise to you, O Christ!

Sermon by Pastor Jonathan Adams

Grace, mercy, and peace to you from Christ Jesus our Lord and partner who fills us up when we're empty. Amen.

In five and a half years of ordained ministry, I've done my fair share of weddings. Enough that I've developed my own rhythms and routines for working with couples and planning a ceremony.

In that first sit-down with a bride and groom, after asking a little bit about how they met, what they love about each other, and why they want to get married, I lay out expectations: what I expect from them, and what they can and cannot expect from me.

And in the midst of that, I explain my three non-negotiables. Basically, I tell them that a Christian wedding can be a lot of things, that it can be simple or elaborate, that we can include lots of special elements, or just keep it to the bare minimum.

But that bare minimum, I tell them, is that the service involves scripture, involves prayer, and involves vows promising lifelong faithfulness. In recent years, many couples have chosen to write their own vows, but, many are just as happy with the old traditional language, maybe something along the lines of:

I, Jonathan, take you Rebekah, to be my wife, to have and to hold from this day forward, for better for worse, for richer for poorer, in sickness and in health, in plenty and in want...

I've always been fond of these vows myself, because of the way that the couplets make it clear that a relationship is NOT all happiness and roses. There are better times, and there are worse times, and everywhere in between.

When we enter into a relationship with someone else, we are called to love and support our partner on the good days, AND the bad days, too. And when we feel so completely and incredibly empty that we can't possibly go on, we can find new hope in a partner that is there to fill us back up.

Now, people like to make all sorts of interpretations about the significance of the story of the Wedding at Cana that we hear in today's Gospel. It's even referenced in one of the options for the Prayer of the Day at weddings, "... as you gladdened the wedding at Cana in Galilee by the presence of your Son, so by his presence now bring your joy to this wedding."

Because one of Christ's first miracles recorded in the gospels, turning water into wine, was performed at a wedding, it's seen by some as a reflection of God's approval on the idea of marriage as a whole. I'm not here today to argue that one way or another, as much as to say that there is so much more than just God saying that marriage is a good thing...

When the wine jars were just about empty, when the party was about to stop, when the joy was about to end... Christ took that emptiness and he transformed it. Refilled what had run dry, taking those empty jars, filling them with water, and changing it to wine and not just normal garden variety table wine, but with the best wine that the wedding guests had had all night.

When all seems lost, broken, and empty. Christ refills us.

When we think about our lives as Christians, and our lives as Christians gathered together as the church, Christ is our partner. Christ is the one who fills us up.

"For better for worse, for richer for poorer, in sickness and in health, in plenty and in want," Christ is the one who promises all of that to us, and more.

The year before I did my pastoral internship at a Lutheran church outside Cumberland, Maryland, the congregation's largest donor, the CEO of a regional healthcare organization, left the area. They were looking at a budget deficit in the tens of thousands, without much in reserve to cover it. Things felt empty.

Just a few years ago, the Boswell Volunteer Fire Department was on the verge of being evicted from the fire station owned by the borough over a dispute about utility costs and building improvements.

The situation was so dire that fire department leadership began to plan for at whose homes the fire trucks and ambulances could be parked if they were locked out of the fire station. Things felt empty.

And these last two years as COVID has ravaged the world... When we first made the decision to suspend in-person worship. When we had to do it again months later after having cautiously resumed over the summer. As we've cancelled events and had to completely reframe our ways of doing church. Things have felt empty.

...But a year after my internship congregation took that major financial hit to their budget, they had recouped that loss by dozens of members new and old each giving a bit more. Their budget was, in fact, stronger than ever.

During the stalemate between the Boswell Fire Department and the Borough Council, an anonymous donor from hours away saw a news report and pledged hundreds of thousands of dollars to help the department build and move into a brand new station of their own.

And throughout the last two years, as everything has felt so empty, we've continually found new ways of being and doing church.

Emptiness can be transformed. When we feel like we have absolutely nothing left, Christ takes our nothingness and turns it into something. And when we involve Christ in our struggles, that mere something that we think we have can become magnificent.

It's not negotiable. Our life with Christ includes a vow of lifelong faithfulness. In sickness and in health, in plenty and in want, Christ is with us. Transforming our emptiness.

What a blessing it is to have a partner like that for all of our lives and beyond. Amen.

Prayers of Intercession

P: The Spirit of the Lord is poured out upon us in abundance; so we are bold to pray for the church, the world, and all that God has made.

P: By your Spirit, activate within your church gifts of faith, healing, and prophecy. Unite those who profess your name across congregations, denominations, and geographic boundaries. Open our hearts to recognize and celebrate surprising miracles. God of grace,

A: hear our prayer.

P: Your creation reflects your generosity. Bless farmers, migrant farmworkers, orchard-keepers, ranchers, and all who tend the abundance of the land. Protect food and water sources from destruction, that all can eat and drink and be satisfied. God of grace,

A: hear our prayer.

P: By your Spirit, grant wisdom, knowledge, and discernment to those who hold leadership positions at any level. Direct policymakers toward compassionate decisions that build up safe and just communities. Lead all authorities in seeking and serving the common good. God of grace,

A: hear our prayer.

P: As Jesus provided generously in a moment of need, provide generous gifts of healing for those in need this day (especially). Provide abundantly for all who are hungry or thirsty, all seeking shelter, and all who seek peace. God of grace,

A: hear our prayer.

P: You see us for who we are and you delight in us. Embrace those struggling with self-worth, wrestling with self-identity, or facing significant life transition. Remind us that nothing can separate us from your love. God of grace,

A: hear our prayer.

P: You bless us through the spiritual gifts of the saints who have gone before us. We give thanks for the life of Martin Luther King, Jr. and all who have modeled the way of courageous faith (especially). God of grace,

A: hear our prayer.

P: Since we have such great hope in your promises, O God, we lift these and all of our prayers to you in confidence and faith; through Jesus Christ our Savior.

A: Amen.

Blessing

The love of God surround you; the grace of ✠ Christ release you; and the Holy Spirit be your guide and strength, now and forevermore. **Amen.**