



Mount Calvary Connected

September 15, 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/

A Message from Pastor Scott Klimke

"Do you see what I see?"

I last used this line from a familiar carol during the trial sermon I delivered for the first congregation I served. The good people of Faith Lutheran responded by playing the carol in its entirety on the first anniversary of my ordination. Years later I now turn to the carol popularized by Bing Crosby again. "Do you see what I see?"

As your pastor for less than ten percent of your congregational history, I can only see what's transpired over the last six and a half years. But I do give thanks for all the positives I wasn't around to see throughout Mount Calvary's much longer history. It's what the Church does in worship. We look back and celebrate. We look forward and celebrate. God is good all the time!

As for what we might see now, did you notice Mount Calvary was on the nightly news over the weekend? This was the second time we made the nightly news in recent years. In keeping with Matthew 5:16, might it be that our shared passion is to let our light shine before others so they might see our good works and glorify our Father in heaven? I don't know. You have to tell me so we might organize our congregational life around this shared passion. Do you see what I see?

Sticking with what we might see now, I also know last week we solicited help for a Christian sibling in need. This sister in Christ had faraway medical appointments she couldn't drive to herself because of recent surgery. Because she has no family in the area, she needed us to be the family Jesus has called us to be, (Luke 8:21). It happened. Transportation was arranged in hours; with other offers of help coming in for days. In keeping with John 13:34, might it be that our shared passion is to love one another as Christ first loved us? I don't know. Do you see what I see?

At Mount Calvary, we do need to find the passion that presently unites us. We have a tendency to speak of what we want more than we speak of how the Holy Spirit is stirring in our hearts and calling us to action. But this isn't how mission works. Point A is the Christian passion that unites us more than any other. Point B is the result this Christ-like passion produces by God's grace as we stick with it over time. With God good all the time, we know whatever passion unites us will produce positive things worthy of thanksgiving and appreciation. But first there has to be the passion that unites us. Again, do you see what I see or do you see another one of many possible Christ-like passions uniting us at present?

I look forward to your feedback!

Pastor Scott

Upcoming Meetings/Events

Pond Cleaning/Weeding Event: September 15th at 6:00 p.m.

WELCA: September 19th at 6:00 p.m.

Church Council: September 20th at 6:30 p.m.

Walk Thru Basket Party & Bake Sale: September 24th (10-2) and September 25th (9-2)

Bible Study on Psalms: September 28th at 6:30 p.m.

The Property Committee will meet on the second Tuesday of every month at 6:00 p.m. in the old lounge.

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.

Volunteers who can be available on short notice are needed to help with set-up, serving, and tear-down after funeral luncheons.

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!

Giving Tree

The Giving Tree collected \$337 for the months of July and August. WELCA generously donated \$115 of that amount. This allowed us to pack 75 bags for God's Work, Our Hands Sunday. The bags were donated to children at Conemaugh Hospital.

The donations for September and October will be going toward the Hozanna House Project. This is a mission who works on local projects, such as cleaning up areas of town, painting or repairing houses, etc. Monetary donations, as well as volunteer opportunities will be available. Thank you for your continued support!

Backyard Ministries Hat/Glove Collection

Once again, Mt. Calvary will be collecting hats and gloves for the children of Coopersdale. Please take a labeled bag, fill it, and return it to the bin in the narthex. This year, there will also be the opportunity to provide a monetary donation, instead of purchasing the items. A basket will be in the narthex for this option as well. Thank you for your continued support!

Choir Reorganization

Several people have been asking about starting up a new choir! Between time lost over COVID and losing a couple of longtime choir members, we will be needing to start fresh!

Over the years at Mount Calvary, we have sometimes worked with small numbers and sometimes included large groups of over twenty singers. Some have been strong musicians and others of modest ability. We have sung in unison and in parts. We have occasionally included ambitious music such as that of Mozart and Handel, and even sung significant portions of the Messiah! The one constant is that we have worked with people who are available and are willing to give freely of their time. This is an opportunity where anyone can participate.

By singing in the choir, you yourself become a stronger musician. Singing is a form of prayer. Singing touches our souls. Singing in a group connects us in a spiritual way.

For this September, it might be nice to tiptoe gently into a new season. I am thinking of beginning with some rounds and two-part singing. If this takes off, we certainly can be more ambitious!

Peoples' schedules are busy. In recent years, we have done Wednesday evening rehearsals for those who can make it. Sometimes I meet people individually. Sometimes people join in last minute at the choir warmup before the service. I often record parts and, these days, can send an audio text to help people be better prepared.

Since I do not know everyone in the congregation and may not have invited you to sing, let me know if you would like to give it a try! Thanks so much!

Talk to Dan Gresh after any church service or text or call at 814-659-5109

Computer & Internet Connection Now Available

Members may use the computer in the library during office hours: Monday – Thursday 9 a.m. to 1 p.m.

Usher Teams

We are looking to recruit teams of ushers staffed with at least four people. Each group will be assigned to Saturdays or Sundays and a month which works for them. Once the day and month have been arranged, it will be up to the people on the team to determine who will be taking the various weeks in the assigned month. Please be in contact with Pastor Scott should you wish to become a part of a team or have already recruited a time of four.

Scheduled Worship Help

Usher Team for Saturdays (September):

Linda Barnhart, Pat Bittner, Joan Bunnell, Janis Daily

Usher Team for Sundays (September):

Ray Leverknight, Jeff Penrod, Cathy Prisk, Jim Prisk

Readers/Communion Assistants (September):

Saturday, September 17: Mari Grace and Hayden Lingenfelter

Sunday, September 18: Noelle Berkey

Saturday, September 24: Cindy Buday and Claudia Plows

Sunday, September 25: Mike Kozak

There are sign up sheets in the Narthex for Greeters/Ushers and Readers/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 or Chris Oleksa at 814-244-9851.



Youth News

Children's Sunday School for youth in preschool, elementary, and middle school started September 11th. See Pastor Jonathan for more information.

IGNITE - Elementary Youth Retreat (Grades 2 - 6): September 24-25 @ Camp Sequanota

PLUNGE - Jr. High Retreat (Grades 6 -9): October 1-2 @ Camp Sequanota

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.

T-shirt and Sweatshirt Sale

WELCA will be sponsoring a Mt. Calvary spirit wear t-shirt and sweatshirt sale soon. It will be through F/X on-line store. Sizes, colors, and items will be announced soon, along with instructions on purchasing! Great for Fall and early Christmas gift shopping!! Watch for more details to be announced.

Pond Cleaning/Weeding Event

The Property Committee will be hosting a pond clean out/weeding on Thursday, September 15th at 6:00 p.m. Bring your favorite tools!

Walk Thru Basket Party

We are having a Walk Thru Basket Party on September 24th (10-2pm) and September 25th (9-2pm). Tickets are \$5 for 26 chances. Winners will be drawn on Facebook Live at 2:30pm on September 25th and contacted via phone/email.

We are asking for your support of the event with the following: purchase tickets, filled baskets, gift certificates, or cash. Tickets will be on sale before and after church services.

Bake Sale

Calling all Bakers! WELCA is hosting another one of our famous bake sales during the walk-through Basket Party on September 24th and 25th.

Please contribute your favorite baked goods. Especially popular and requested are fudge, gobs, gob cake, no-bakes, scones, nut rolls, assorted muffins, assorted mini-breads, sugar free items, and believe it or not, dog treats!!

Baked goods can be dropped off either morning of the basket party, or by making other arrangements with any WELCA member.

Pet Blessing Service

Pastor Jonathan will be holding a pet blessing event in the pre-school yard on Wednesday, October 5th at 6:00 p.m.

Watch for details and have your special family members visit our church that day.

Annual Clothing Sale

The Social Ministry Team will be having their annual clothing sale on Saturday, October 8th from 9-1 p.m. We now have a storage area downstairs at the church that allows us to start collecting items earlier. If you have any clothes you would like to donate, please bag them by size and gender. This makes it easier during the sorting process. You can drop the clothes off at any time. If the church is locked, and no one is available in the office, please leave them by the blue bin outside. It will be checked daily. If you have any questions, please contact Mike Kozak at 244-6880. Thank you!

World Food Day Celebration

Join ELCA World Hunger for a celebration of World Food Day, hosted by Rick Steves and special guest Mark Jansen, CEO of Blue Diamond Almonds. This special event will be streamed online so you can celebrate with ELCA World Hunger wherever you are!

When: Sunday, Oct. 16th at 4 p.m. (Central time)

Where: ELCA Facebook page and ELCA YouTube channel

RSVP not required; simply visit our Facebook or YouTube page to attend. Facebook and YouTube accounts are not required. Can't stream it live? The recording will be available on Facebook and YouTube after the event is over.

Questions? Contact hunger@elca.org.

Boscov's "Friends Helping Friends" Shopping Passes

WELCA is selling Boscov's "Friends Helping Friends" discount shopping passes again this year. Your \$5.00 donation entitles you to a shopping pass to Boscov's on October 19th, giving you a 25% discount on most purchases. Proceeds benefit WELCA's many activities throughout the year. Let any WELCA member know you'd like to purchase a pass or watch for someone selling them in the Narthex after services.

Lutheran Disaster Response: U.S. Flooding

Beginning on July 27th, a line of severe storms dumped record amounts of rain on eastern Kentucky, overflowing rivers and creeks onto streets and neighborhoods. The death toll in Kentucky is expected to rise as search and rescue efforts continue. The number of people missing is still unknown. Rising waters are damaging infrastructure, including roads, bridges and power lines, which hinders rescue efforts.

The flooding has destroyed hundreds of homes and other buildings and left families with nothing. These severe floods are not limited to Kentucky; there has been flooding in Missouri, Illinois, Indiana, West Virginia and other states in the region.

As the waters recede and the full scope of the damage is assessed, Lutheran Disaster Response will work with the Indiana-Kentucky Synod and local communities to focus on long-term needs. We anticipate that the response will include rebuilding homes, replacing lost household items, and providing emotional and spiritual care to survivors.

Please consider donating to this cause. Gifts to "U.S. flooding" will be used in full (100%) to assist those affected by floods.

Give now for Eastern Europe Crisis Response

On February 24th, Russian forces invaded Ukraine, launching land, sea, and air attacks. Airports are now shut, and few railway lines are operational. Civilians fleeing the violence are heading toward Ukraine's western districts and such neighboring countries as Poland, Moldova, Slovakia, Romania, and Hungary. Millions of people are seeking refuge in neighboring countries. There are major humanitarian concerns for both internally displaced people and refugees. Many of these Ukrainians fleeing their homes need shelter, basic necessities, and pastoral care.

Lutheran Disaster Response is accompanying our companions in Ukraine, Hungary, Poland, Slovakia, Romania, and Moldova, as well as such ecumenical partners as Lutheran World Federation and Church World Service, in their humanitarian responses to the crisis. These partners provide refugees with immediate support and supplies such as food, blankets, water, and hygiene kits.

Your gifts designated for "Eastern Europe Crisis Response" will be used entirely (100%) to provide support for people impacted by conflict in the region.

Birthdays and Anniversaries for the Week: September 18 – September 24, 2022

Sept. 18 - Levi Allison

Sept. 19 - Lillian Bassett, Kimberly George, & Thomas Rohrabaugh

Sept. 20 - Edwin Warshel, Jr.

Sept. 21 - Garrett Anderson, Paul Brodt, William Cononie, Janis Daily, & Ian Selepack

Sept. 22 - Courtney Kylor

Sept. 23 - Richard Hiltz

Sept. 22 - Dick & Lois Sholtis

Sept. 24 - Michael & Lori Zerby

Remember those that prayer has been requested for:

Linda & Dick, Claudia Plows, Maddie Pierce, Gladys Haupt, Bill & Linda, Jose & Family, Dave, Tom, Lt. Hunter Bergman, and Lt. Dylan Merchant, Harold, Rick, Shirley, Debbie, David, Lauren, Billy, Barb, Sara Solarczyk, Jackie Janak, Jack, Corinne, Joan, Dan, Natalie Zerby, Pastor Scott Custead, Luella Koontz, Al Lindner & Family, Bob, Dawn, Stacy & Josh, Bob Trotter, Bill Layton, Deb Zilch, Bennett, Cassy Sojak, Paul Miller, Keith Mayket, Ruth, Pete, Teplitz Family, Ken, John Nerone, Dane Wisner, Jeff, Irene, Karen, Erin, Susan Dyers, Bob McMullen, Wyatt George, Larry Hockensmith, Jean Pellon, Mike, Corey, Pastor Jonathan & Family, Roxanne Horner, Miriam Horner, Becky Lilja, Kathy P., Al Johnson, Chris, Donna & Danny, Cheryl, Jennifer & Family, Jaime, Matt & Ashley, Landon, Max Lawn, Linda Haberkorn, Lorraine, Joe, Donna, Danny & Family, Becky Jo, Bill, Linda & Family, Mary, Mary Jane, Janice, Dennis, Rick, Don, Mabel Ann, Betty, Cathy, Cindy, Jill, Theresa & Family, Dean, Madi & Family, Patty & Family, Sydney & Family, Paulette, Ron, Andrea, Mary Ann, Midge, Rayford, Lois A., Nicole, Trent, Kyle, Anna, Beverly, Sondra, E. Warshel, Audrey Rubis, Carol, Katey, Janice, Trina & Family, Jake Wissinger, Candi Walker, Dave Brehm, Chrissy-Baby Emma, Wyatt, Gerald Barrick, the Shreffler Family, Louise, Kim, Devin, Laura & family, Dorothy, Jo Ann, John Alt, Jan Mertz, Denny, Jill Lisson, Jaci, Dominic Megia, Jackie Hauger, Sharon, Barbara, Louise & Family, Dennis, Sue, Scott, & Brenda.

Financial Update

When your elected leaders reviewed financial reports through the end of July at this week's council meeting, there was once again stability. Even with great decline in the markets, the overall holdings of the congregation are up from where they were a year ago. Receipts are ahead of last year and ahead of budget. Just as positively, expenses are down from where they were a year ago and running under budget. This is all incredibly positive. We just need to avoid complacency. People come and go and it happens more often than usual in Johnstown. We need to be inviting and welcoming to overcome their absence. We also need to be increasing our giving when possible to offset the losses not covered by the addition of new faces and families. Thanks a bundle for your support!

Condensed Worship for Sunday, September 11, 2022**Prayer of the Day**

P: O God, overflowing with mercy and compassion, you lead back to yourself all those who go astray. Preserve your people in your loving care, that we may reject whatever is contrary to you and may follow all things that sustain our life in your Son, Jesus Christ, our Savior and Lord. **Amen.**

First Reading: Exodus 32:7-14

The Lord said to Moses, "Go down at once! Your people, whom you brought up out of the land of Egypt, have acted perversely; they have been quick to turn aside from the way that I commanded them; they have cast for themselves an image of a calf, and have worshiped it and sacrificed to it, and said, 'These are your gods, O Israel, who brought you up out of the land of Egypt!'" The Lord said to Moses, "I have seen this people, how stiff-necked they are. Now let me alone, so that my wrath may burn hot against them and I may consume them; and of you I will make a great nation."

But Moses implored the Lord his God, and said, "O Lord, why does your wrath burn hot against your people, whom you brought out of the land of Egypt with great power and with a mighty hand? Why should the Egyptians say, 'It was with evil intent that he brought them out to kill them in the mountains, and to consume them from the face of the earth'? Turn from your fierce wrath; change

your mind and do not bring disaster on your people. Remember Abraham, Isaac, and Israel, your servants, how you swore to them by your own self, saying to them, ‘I will multiply your descendants like the stars of heaven, and all this land that I have promised I will give to your descendants, and they shall inherit it forever.’” And the Lord changed his mind about the disaster that he planned to bring on his people.

P: The word of the Lord,

A: Thanks be to God!

Psalm 51:1-10

P: Have mercy on me, O God, according to your steadfast love; in your great compassion blot out my offenses.

A: Wash me through and through from my wickedness, and cleanse me from my sin.

P: For I know my offenses, and my sin is ever before me.

A: Against you only have I sinned and done what is evil in your sight; so you are justified when you speak and right in your judgment.

P: Indeed, I was born steeped in wickedness, a sinner from my mother’s womb.

A: Indeed, you delight in truth deep within me, and would have me know wisdom deep within.

P: Remove my sins with hyssop, and I shall be clean; wash me, and I shall be purer than snow.

A: Let me hear joy and gladness; that the body you have broken may rejoice.

P: Hide your face from my sins, and blot out all my wickedness.

A: Create in me a clean heart, O God, and renew a right spirit within me.

Second Reading: 1 Timothy 1:12-17

I am grateful to Christ Jesus our Lord, who has strengthened me, because he judged me faithful and appointed me to his service, even though I was formerly a blasphemer, a persecutor, and a man of violence. But I received mercy because I had acted ignorantly in unbelief, and the grace of our Lord overflowed for me with the faith and love that are in Christ Jesus. The saying is sure and worthy of full acceptance, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners—of whom I am the foremost. But for that very reason I received mercy, so that in me, as the foremost, Jesus Christ might display the utmost patience, making me an example to those who would come to believe in him for eternal life. To the King of the ages, immortal, invisible, the only God, be honor and glory forever and ever. Amen.

P: The word of the Lord,

A: Thanks be to God!

Gospel: Luke 15:1-10

Now all the tax collectors and sinners were coming near to listen to [Jesus.] And the Pharisees and the scribes were grumbling and saying, “This fellow welcomes sinners and eats with them.” So he told them this parable: “Which one of you, having a hundred sheep and losing one of them, does not leave the ninety-nine in the wilderness and go after the one that is lost until he finds it? When he has found it, he lays it on his shoulders and rejoices. And when he comes home, he calls together his friends and neighbors, saying to them, ‘Rejoice with me, for I have found my sheep that was lost.’ Just so, I tell you,

there will be more joy in heaven over one sinner who repents than over ninety-nine righteous persons who need no repentance. “Or what woman having ten silver coins, if she loses one of them, does not light a lamp, sweep the house, and search carefully until she finds it? When she has found it, she calls together her friends and neighbors, saying, ‘Rejoice with me, for I have found the coin that I had lost.’ Just so, I tell you, there is joy in the presence of the angels of God over one sinner who repents.”

P: The gospel of the Lord.

A: Praise to you, O Christ!

Sermon by Pastor Scott Klimke

From now until the end of October, our second reading will most often come from 1st or 2nd Timothy. In these letters, St. Paul mentors a younger follower on the basics of faithful ministry. As today’s reading from 1st Timothy makes plain, St. Paul is of the mind that faithful ministry is first and foremost about keeping a particular saying alive and well. This sure saying worthy of full acceptance announces that Jesus Christ came into the world to save sinners. It’s here, St. Paul says, where faithful ministry begins and continues. For Paul, all faithful ministry grows out of the Good News that we sinners have been saved from the grisly and deadly consequences of our sins by the grace of God at work in Jesus Christ.

And so, have you heard it today? Have you heard that in the mercy of almighty God Jesus Christ was given to die for us and for Christ’s sake and Christ’s sake alone God forgives us all our sins? If you don’t hear this message in one way or another every time you come to church, something is wrong. You need to say to your pastors and lay leaders, “I’m not hearing it. I’m not hearing the Good News of Jesus Christ. I’m not hearing how the saying is sure and worthy of full acceptance that Jesus Christ came into the world to save sinners.” When ministry is faithful, all roads travel in, out, and through this Good News.

But then again, proclaiming the Good News of Jesus Christ with regularity and in plain and unmistakable language isn’t enough. To reach the finish line called salvation or eternal life this message has to be paired with faith. This is made plain enough in our reading from 1st Timothy. Who receives eternal life? Those who believe in Jesus; those who have faith in Jesus. And if you don’t know it already, let me tell you faith is not a given. Faith is actually a human impossibility. As St. Paul says in his first letter to those at Corinth, it’s only through the Holy Spirit that we possess the faith to call Jesus Lord. Please, please, please, do not subscribe to the false teaching that’s out there today. Faith is not a human work. Faith is another gift from God complementing and completing the gift of Jesus Christ; a gift the Holy Spirit most often gives when we gather together to hear, speak, and sing the word of God, to remember or receive baptism, and to partake of the Lord’s Supper. And this brings me to what I’ll call the second phase of faithful ministry.

If the first phase of faithful ministry is to proclaim and proclaim and proclaim how it’s sure and worthy of full acceptance that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners, then the second phase of faithful ministry is to give the Holy Spirit as many opportunities as possible to create and sustain faith in this Good News. And again, under what kind of conditions is the Holy Spirit most likely to gift us with faith in Jesus? When we gather together and around the word of God and the sacraments of God. This means lots and lots of in-person fellowship; lots and lots of Bible readings and Bible-inspired words; lots and lots of baptismal reception and remembrance; lots and lots of holy communion. It’s all old-fashioned stuff, but it remains as essential as ever.

Without lots and lots of in-person fellowship, lots and lots of Bible use, lots and lots of baptismal reception or remembrance, and lots and lots of holy communion, we're not giving the Holy Spirit enough bites at the apple. The end result may very well be that the Holy Spirit is not given enough opportunity to plant and grow the faith that leads to eternal life. This is why phase two of faithful ministry is just as important as phase one of faithful ministry. People need to hear the saying is sure and worthy of full acceptance that Christ Jesus came into to the world to save sinners. But they also need to be in the Holy Spirit's presence often enough for faith in this Good News to emerge and stay. And yet, as this gets us to heaven, it doesn't tell us anything about what we're to do now.

I hope we all know this but let me say it anyway. As the Church, we're not called to twiddle our thumbs until eternal life becomes ours through the grace of God at work in Jesus Christ and the Holy Spirit's gift of faith. What we're called to do now is anticipate in thought, word, and deed how things will eventually be in the Kingdom of God forever. We Lutherans in particular have had our troubles with this. We've long said wonderful and truthful things about how grace alone, Christ alone, and faith alone bring us to salvation, but we haven't had nearly as much to say about how the Holy Spirit's gift of faith is to bring here and now purpose and direction to our lives. It's one of the big reasons our denomination has been in decline for some time now. Though it may be closer than we realize, eternity often seems a long ways from now. If all the Church can talk about is an eternity which often seems distant and far off, many will come to regard the Church as irrelevant.

Another way to say this is that people in general, and younger people in particular, want nothing to do with talk that never gets to walk in real time and space. This is not to say the talk isn't important, but without the walk in real time and space all the talk falls flat and short for many of our neighbors. If Mount Calvary Lutheran Church and other like bodies are to remain viable for years to come, we've more often got to get to what I'll now call the third phase of faithful ministry. Cleanly, clearly, and consistently, we've got to name and live the here and now difference faith is to make. Again and again, we've got to speak to what we are here to do now and how we're actually doing it. Like phase one and two, phase three of faithful ministry is also important. And it happens here at Mount Calvary.

This weekend our parking lot was filled with trucks and emergency vehicles to announce that faith supports families as they attempt to teach their children about the importance of community and communities as they attempt to keep everyone employed, safe, and well. This was faith at work in our here and now not just through Mount Calvary, but through all the organizations and entities represented. What a wonderful thing. It will be just as wonderful when God uses our hands this weekend to pull together play bags for children who find themselves in the hospital. Again, this is faith at work in our here and now. No doubt about it! Phase three of faithful ministry happens here at Mount Calvary, but does it presently involve enough of us? If not, it speaks to the absence of an overall mission or specialty here at Mount Calvary that excites all of us and makes use of the time, talent, and treasure we can all bring to bear for the good of God and neighbor. If it makes us feel better, this doesn't make us unique. Many of the traditional churches are looking for a way forward right about now. It's also not a new problem at Mount Calvary. Read the available literature as I have been doing recently and you'll quickly discover that Mount Calvary has been searching for a defining mission for some time now. The beautiful sanctuary got built, but ever since then the question of now what has been lingering without an answer. It's important that we leave it linger without an answer no more. And so, what I'm going to be doing a good bit as time moves along is give you options for a defining mission and then wait to hear what you think of them. And here's today's option.

As people saved by grace, faith calls and equips us to be people of grace now. This happens when we go to bat for people like Moses does in our reading from Exodus and like Abraham did a few weeks ago

in a reading from Genesis. It happens when we avoid the self-serving judgmentalism that Jesus opposes today. Perhaps most concretely, it happens when like the shepherd who drops everything to look for one lost sheep or the woman who puts everything else on hold until one lost coin is found, we too talk, act, and live as if there's a place for every repentant sinner in Christ's Church and in the world Christ died to save. As our readings today testify, this could become our specialty and defining mission. All people saved by grace, we could make it our mission to become people of interpersonal grace ourselves now and always. What do you think? I look forward to your feedback. Amen!

Prayers of Intercession

P: As scattered grains of wheat are gathered together into one bread, so let us gather our prayers for the church, those in need, and all of God's good creation.

P: Your people receive mercy and your grace overflows in our lives. Fill your church with faith and love and give understanding hearts to those who work to strengthen our ecumenical and interreligious commitments. God of grace,

A: hear our prayer.

P: Your creation groans as it suffers the impacts of pollution and lack of care. As the seasons change, renew in us the will to protect plants, animals, and habitats. Bless us with bountiful harvests that all may share. God of grace,

A: hear our prayer.

P: Your world is shattered and the nations rage. Remember us in your mercy. Teach wisdom to our elected leaders so that we know peace in our world, peace in our homes, and peace in our hearts. God of grace,

A: hear our prayer.

P: Your children wander homeless and the hungry cry for bread. Seek out those who are lost or lonely, anxious or depressed, or struggling with addiction or illness. Provide for those in any need (especially). God of grace,

A: hear our prayer.

P: Your work is done in this congregation with our hands, feet, voices, minds, and hearts. Build up the ministries of this community, that we serve our neighbors and welcome the stranger in your name. God of grace,

A: hear our prayer.

P: Your blessed saints who have died now rest in your presence. Give us thankful hearts for those who have been examples of faith in our lives and receive us with joy when we come to share eternal life with you. God of grace,

A: hear our prayer.

P: Gathered together in the sweet communion of the Holy Spirit, gracious God, we offer these and all our prayers to you; through Jesus Christ, our Savior.

A: Amen.

Blessing

P: Signed and sealed by the Holy Spirit, you are Christ's message of love for this troubled world, written by the same Sender. May our Lord Jesus Christ and God our Father, who loved us and through grace gave us eternal comfort and good hope, ☩ comfort your hearts and strengthen them in every good work and word. **Amen.**