



Mount Calvary Connected

September 29, 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 Jonathan Adams

Just moments ago, I saw a photo of several blocks of oceanfront homes in Fort Myers, Florida which were destroyed by Hurricane Ian. I'm sure there are photos and videos of many more scenes like it which will emerge in the days ahead.

Being so far removed from the coastland, it can be easy to look at these images with almost a sense of detachment. It simply doesn't seem real. In Western Pennsylvania, we are accustomed to floods, blizzards, and the occasional tornado; we've even had some closeby disasters of a more man-made nature like the crash of Flight 93, or the Quecreek Mine Disaster.

But most of the natural disasters we face in modern times are nothing compared to the threat of hurricanes in the south. People whose homes were almost literally wiped off the map will not be able to bounce back so easily.

One of the things I greatly appreciate about our communications coordinator Erin Powell who pulls together this email and mailing each week is that she does a very good job of lifting up the current projects and fundraising appeals of "Lutheran Disaster Response," and frankly, there are many. Hardly a month goes by where they are not collecting funds to go to some different part of the country struck by some different disaster: flooding, hurricanes, tornadoes, wildfires, and on and on.

It could be easy to just ignore these appeals, maybe even to believe that your gift could not possibly make an impact, but you would be wrong on both counts.

Lutheran Disaster Response is funded primarily by the ELCA through "mission support" or benevolence giving. That means that your regular offering dollars help to cover their overhead costs, and that when

they make these special appeals for specific disasters or projects, your money goes directly to meeting the needs of those communities most effected.

In the days ahead, our news will show us all sorts of images of destruction, but also images of recovery, but many of the agencies and individuals that respond most immediately are also the quickest to go home. Meanwhile, Lutheran Disaster Response has a reputation for truly being in it for the long haul and working with folks until they are truly back on their feet. This is something to be immensely proud of (even if we tend to be pretty humble as Lutherans.)

So, let's pray for our neighbors to the South who have been effected by this latest natural disaster, and when things get set up and its obvious what needs can be met by our partners with Lutheran Disaster Response, let's put our money where our prayer is and support them as they help in the long haul recovery.

Yours in Christ,
Pastor Jonathan

Upcoming Meetings/Events

Blessing of Pets: October 5th at 6:00 p.m.

Evangelism Committee: October 6th at 6:30 p.m.

Clothing Sale: October 8th

Property Committee: October 11th at 6:00 p.m.

Bible Study on Psalms: October 12th at 6:30 p.m.

WELCA: October 17th at 6:00 p.m.

Church Council: October 18th at 6:30 p.m.

Youth & Family Ministry Committee: October 20th at 6:30 p.m.

Youth & Family Trip to Weakland Farms: October 23rd at 1 p.m.

Bible Study on Psalms: October 26th 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!

Help Us Fill in the Blanks!

Our birthdate, wedding anniversary, and church membership records are incomplete. We have been working on moving records from paper to electronic and it's a huge undertaking. Please help Terri or one of our volunteers if they contact you for missing information. You can be a bigger help by calling the church office to verify birth and anniversary dates with Terri. Thanks for your cooperation!

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 (October):

Jerry Pozun, Ruth Pozun, David Saloka, and Stacey Saloka

Usher Team for Sundays (October):

Family of Keith & Wendy Mayket and Family of Chris & Tiffany Swartz

Readers/Communion Assistants (October):

Saturday, October 1: Courtney Kylor and Jack Weisbrodt

Sunday, October 2: Jim Prisk

Saturday, October 8: Shirley Sholtis-Glova and Jan Layton

Sunday, October 9: Dan Bantley

Saturday, October 15: Bill Layton and Cindy Solarczyk

Sunday, October 16: Joan Hunter

Saturday, October 22: Todd Moss and Kevin Oleksa

Saturday, October 23: Noelle Berkey

Saturday, October 29: Anita Brodt and Missy Brodt

Sunday, October 30: Joan Hunter

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.

Youth & Family Trip to Weakland Farms: On October 23rd, we're planning a trip to Weakland Farms near Portage for their corn maze, pumpkin patch, and other fun fall activities for all ages! We'll gather at the church at 1 p.m. for a late lunch and snacks before caravanning to the farm! Talk to Pastor Jonathan for more information and to RSVP.

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.

WELCA Spirit T-shirt and Sweatshirt Sale

It's not too early to Christmas shop, or treat yourself to new, colorful Mt. Calvary T-Shirts, Sweatshirts, Hoodies, etc. WELCA's Spirit Sale is being held online. Visit <https://mtcalvalrylutheranchurch.itemorder.com> to see the selection of items, colors, sizes and prices. Place your order, pay and get a receipt all on-line with F/X Screen Printing.

Deadline to order is October 31st. All purchases will be delivered to the church and a WELCA member will contact you to arrange pick-up at the church.

Any questions, contact any WELCA member, or F/X at the number on the website. Prices were rounded up slightly, and proceeds will benefit WELCA's many activities.

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.

Bosco's "Friends Helping Friends" Shopping Passes

WELCA is selling Bosco's "Friends Helping Friends" discount shopping passes again this year. Your \$5.00 donation entitles you to a shopping pass to Bosco'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.

Youth & Family Trip to Weakland Farms

On October 23rd, we're planning a trip to Weakland Farms near Portage for their corn maze, pumpkin patch, and other fun fall activities for all ages! We'll gather at the church at 1pm for a late lunch and snacks before caravanning to the farm! Talk to Pastor Jonathan for more information and to RSVP.

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: October 1 – October 8, 2022

Oct. 1 - Jill Marsh, Erin Shaffer, & Robert Yannutz
Oct. 2 - Camden Williams
Oct. 3 - Joseph Kocis, Sr.
Oct. 4 - Jason Kylor
Oct. 5 - Marlene Barrick
Oct. 7 - Nicole Allison, Herb Enos, & McKenzie Zukus
Oct. 8 - Ken Corle & Ruth Ann Wolfe

Oct. 1 - Chad & Susan (Poppvich) Wolfhope
Oct. 2 - Robert & Krista Miller
Oct. 2 - Patty & Eddie Wingard
Oct. 5 - Ed & Joann Greene
Oct. 5 - Mindy & Michael Stohon
Oct. 7 - John & Teresa Lumley Jr.
Oct. 7 - Edward & Susan Penrod

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, Teplitza 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, El 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 the council gathered for its meeting in mid-September, financials through the end of August reported income to be a titch ahead of where it was a year ago and even farther ahead of this year's budget. Preliminary financials for September find income now a bit behind where it was a year ago, with the income surplus versus budget also decreasing. Now is not the time to grow lax in our financial stewardship.

On the expense side of things, August financials found the cost of pursuing our mission was a bit lower than it was a year ago, with the positive difference growing even larger when actual expenses were compared with budgeted expenses. Preliminary financials for September report that August's trend toward lower than expected expenses has continued, with the distance between past expenses and budgeted expenses growing even larger than it was in August.

Your leadership team is again demonstrating that it budgets well and manages expenses well. We just need to continue to support their fine efforts by being as generous as we can be with our time, talent, and treasure. Thanks for all the ways this has already been done and will continue to be done!

Condensed Worship for Sunday, September 25, 2022

Prayer of the Day

P: O God, rich in mercy, you look with compassion on this troubled world. Feed us with your grace and grant us the treasure that comes only from you, through Jesus Christ, our Savior and Lord. **Amen.**

First Reading: Amos 6:1a, 4-7

Alas for those who are at ease in Zion, and for those who feel secure on Mount Samaria, Alas for those who lie on beds of ivory, and lounge on their couches, and eat lambs from the flock, and calves from the stall; who sing idle songs to the sound of the harp, and like David improvise on instruments of music; who drink wine from bowls, and anoint themselves with the finest oils, but are not grieved over the ruin of Joseph! Therefore they shall now be the first to go into exile, and the revelry of the loungers shall pass away.

P: The word of the Lord,

A: Thanks be to God!

Psalm 146

P: Hallelujah! Praise the Lord, O my soul!

A: I will praise the Lord as long as I live; I will sing praises to my God while I have my being.

P: Put not your trust in rulers, in mortals in whom there is no help.

A: When they breathe their last, they return to earth, and in that day their thoughts perish.

P: Happy are they who have the God of Jacob for their help, whose hope is in the Lord their God;

A: who made heaven and earth, the seas, and all that is in them; who keeps promises forever;

P: who gives justice to those who are oppressed, and food to those who hunger. The Lord sets the captive free.

A: The Lord opens the eyes of the blind; the Lord lifts up those who are bowed down; the Lord loves the righteous.

P: The Lord cares for the stranger; the Lord sustains the orphan and widow, but frustrates the way of the wicked.

A: The Lord shall reign forever, your God, O Zion, throughout all generations. Hallelujah!

Second Reading: 1 Timothy 6:6-19

Of course, there is great gain in godliness combined with contentment; for we brought nothing into the world, so that we can take nothing out of it; but if we have food and clothing, we will be content with these. But those who want to be rich fall into temptation and are trapped by many senseless and harmful desires that plunge people into ruin and destruction. For the love of money is a root of all kinds of evil, and in their eagerness to be rich some have wandered away from the faith and pierced themselves with many pains.

But as for you, man of God, shun all this; pursue righteousness, godliness, faith, love, endurance, gentleness. Fight the good fight of the faith; take hold of the eternal life, to which you were called and for which you made the good confession in the presence of many witnesses. In the presence of God, who gives life to all things, and of Christ Jesus, who in his testimony before Pontius Pilate made the good confession, I charge you to keep the commandment without spot or blame until the manifestation of our Lord Jesus Christ, which he will bring about at the right time—he who is the blessed and only Sovereign, the King of kings and Lord of lords. It is he alone who has immortality and dwells in unapproachable light, whom no one has ever seen or can see; to him be honor and eternal dominion. Amen.

As for those who in the present age are rich, command them not to be haughty, or to set their hopes on the uncertainty of riches, but rather on God who richly provides us with everything for our enjoyment. They are to do good, to be rich in good works, generous, and ready to share, thus storing up for themselves the treasure of a good foundation for the future, so that they may take hold of the life that really is life.

P: The word of the Lord,

A: Thanks be to God!

Gospel: Luke 16:19-31

[Jesus said:] “There was a rich man who was dressed in purple and fine linen and who feasted sumptuously every day. And at his gate lay a poor man named Lazarus, covered with sores, who longed to satisfy his hunger with what fell from the rich man’s table; even the dogs would come and lick his sores. The poor man died and was carried away by the angels to be with Abraham. The rich man also died and was buried. In Hades, where he was being tormented, he looked up and saw Abraham far away with Lazarus by his side. He called out, ‘Father Abraham, have mercy on me, and send Lazarus to dip the tip of his finger in water and cool my tongue; for I am in agony in these flames.’ But Abraham said, ‘Child, remember that during your lifetime you received your good things, and Lazarus in like manner evil things; but now he is comforted here, and you are in agony. Besides all this, between you

and us a great chasm has been fixed, so that those who might want to pass from here to you cannot do so, and no one can cross from there to us.’ He said, ‘Then, father, I beg you to send him to my father’s house—for I have five brothers—that he may warn them, so that they will not also come into this place of torment.’ Abraham replied, ‘They have Moses and the prophets; they should listen to them.’ He said, ‘No, father Abraham; but if someone goes to them from the dead, they will repent.’ He said to him, ‘If they do not listen to Moses and the prophets, neither will they be convinced even if someone rises from the dead.’”

P: The gospel of the Lord.

A: Praise to you, O Christ!

Sermon by Pastor Scott Klimke

When a couple gets married in a church, communication travels in multiple directions. At times, the couple addresses each other in the hearing of those present. When this happens, the eyes and ears of two people are locked in on each other as those present also train their attention upon the couple getting married. But at other times, God addresses the couple and their guests and then there are the times that the couple and those present address God in prayer. When God is addressing people or people are addressing God, the body positioning shifts and all eyes and ears are trained on God. And the hope is that this pivoting back and forth between God and people will form something of a reinforcing circle where the couple’s love for people is informed by what God has had to say, as their prayers to God are also informed by all that their God-like love for others celebrates and mourns. It’s one way to think about what doesn’t happen in our reading from Luke.

In this reading, a rich man never embraces a poor neighbor with God-like love. Able to call Lazarus by name, it would seem the rich man is aware of his poor neighbor, but does nothing to help him. There’s also no evidence the rich man ever prays for Lazarus and the poor. Is this because the rich man never pivots toward God and God’s word or is it because his pivot towards God and God’s word has been perfunctory and half-hearted? What’s certain is that we need to pivot toward God and God’s word regularly; giving God our full and undivided attention. Otherwise, our love for God will be less apt to circle back to the love of neighbor and our love of neighbor will be less apt to circle back to God in prayer and concern.

If it ever blossoms at all, faith active in love dies on the vine unless it’s regularly warmed and watered by God’s word. It’s why when baptism is celebrated or affirmed, considerable emphasis is always placed upon continuing to gather with one another and around God’s audible and visible word as often as possible. Though I’ve said it before, I’ll say it again. Shared, in-person worship centered in word, baptism, and communion is how the Holy Spirit most customarily gifts us with faith and keeps it well. But getting back to what may have happened with the rich man in our reading from Luke, it must be said that just showing up for worship isn’t enough. If we don’t invest ourselves in what goes on in worship, we resist the Holy Spirit and our faith will likely suffer for it. When considering where things went wrong with the rich man in our reading from Luke, it seems likely that it’s here where his eventual troubles began. Most likely, the rich man had gathered for worship, but just went through the motions when he did.

I put this out there because of what Abraham says when the rich man begs for a warning to be sent to his father’s house. Abraham says the rich man’s family has Moses and the prophets and they don’t need anything else to pull their act together. In Luke, Moses and the prophets are a description of the Bible that existed at the time of Jesus and the early Church; a Bible which did not yet have a New

Testament. And it's Abraham's contention that the rich man and his family have this Bible—what we now call the Old Testament. The problem is they haven't listened to the Bible they have. The invested pivot toward God and God's word hasn't happened. People have just been going through the motions. And when this happens, the opportunity for God's word to inform our treatment of others becomes too scarce to matter. With God tuned out, we're far less apt to tune in to the poor and needy like Lazarus. It's why when we gather for worship, and hopefully it's often, maybe with the author of Psalm 19, we should pray, "May the words of my mouth and the meditation of my heart be acceptable to you, O Lord, my rock and my redeemer!" Otherwise, we may just go through the motions.

When we just go through the motions, it's not just that faith isn't formed. It's also that the Holy Spirit is given no opportunity to teach us about how faith is to be active in love. This is a lesson the Spirit tries to impart again and again. Though it's sometimes perceived to be, the word of God isn't all that complicated. Even with the unfamiliar names, places, and practices, the basic messages are the same week to week. God's word, if you give it your attention, repeats and repeats and repeats. God wants to connect rather than to overwhelm so God repeats and repeats and repeats. And one of the things God repeats is that his kingdom shall not be like the kingdoms we've known up to now. In God's kingdom, there shall be equity and equality. In God's kingdom, there shall be justice and fairness. In God's kingdom, mourning, crying, and pain shall be gone because anyone who fails to repent of that which leads others to suffer shall not be present. With the unrepentant troublemakers gone forever, in God's kingdom there shall no longer be the haves and the have nots; only the haves. As heaven for Lazarus and hell for the rich man illustrate, and as we've often heard during this year of readings from Luke, in the end those who exalt themselves shall be humbled and those who humble themselves shall be exalted. With us, or if it has to be, without us, God shall see to it that the playing field is level and that fairness shall abound. This is something God's word repeats and repeats and repeats. And when we hear it, we too adopt God's commitment to healthy communities for all.

When it happens in an invested way, the pivot towards God does indeed produce a pivot toward others and their wellbeing. And over time, this pivot towards others and their needs pivots us back towards God again with the prayers and questions it produces and our eyes and our ears longing to be filled by the One who knows more than we do. When it happens as planned, a life of faith is indeed a circle that keeps on traveling from God back to neighbor and from neighbor back to God. But let's not forget it all starts with bringing our whole self to worship. Without eyes and ears trained on God for a time, we may become like the rich man in our reading from Luke. Even amidst the fires of hell, he worries only about his family and not about neighbors like Lazarus and too often these are the worries of the haves who care not about the have-nots. My, oh my, is investing in worship with the whole self ever essential. It brings to mind a mission that could become our uniting passion here at Mount Calvary.

Here at Mount Calvary, we could devote ourselves to doing everything we can to connect as many people as possible with the word of God that never ceases to call us in the direction of communities that are fair and just and equitable for all. Without the attention and investment of all who are present for worship, making this connection will be impossible. Again, just going through the motions is never going to be good enough. But maybe there are things we do or fail to do that work against attention and investment on the part of some.

If it even needs to be said, new methods of communication are emerging all the time. Kids no longer learn to write in cursive. Screens of all sorts grab hold of us in ways that are laser-fast and multisensory. Social media posts leave little time for meditation; instead beckoning us to like or dislike

and to comment and maybe even to share. Satellites have put maps and antennas out of business. The podcast is now a thing. And who knows what will be next. Maybe it's time to investigate how these new forms of communication can be incorporated into our worship life and everything else we do as a congregation. It certainly would leave us with quite a mission to pursue, and quite a lot of creative rethinking to do. But then again, our reading from Luke does seem to say that doing everything we can to connect as many people as possible with the word of God that always calls us toward the need of neighbor is the mission when you get down to it. 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: O God, rich in mercy, fill your church with righteousness, faith, love, endurance, and gentleness. Empower the baptized by your Spirit to be rich in good works and ready to share. God of grace,

A: hear our prayer.

P: Protect the earth and its creatures. Provide water, food, shelter, and favorable habitats, especially for endangered species. Preserve threatened ice caps, glaciers, parks, and beaches. God of grace,

A: hear our prayer.

P: Increase justice in nations, local governments, and courtrooms. Guide lawyers and those who hold public office to act with compassion and discernment. God of grace,

A: hear our prayer.

P: Give food to the hungry. Set the captives free. Lift up those who are bowed down. Watch over the stranger. Tend to those who are ill (especially). Stir us to act in the best interest of our neighbors. God of grace,

A: hear our prayer.

P: Enliven our praise. Inspire musicians, artists, poets, and all who create beauty in this place. God of grace,

A: hear our prayer.

P: Enfold the saints who have died in the arms of your loving care. Grant that the holy angels accompany us and bring us to eternal life with them in the light of your presence. 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: The Lord bless you and keep you. The Lord's face shine on you with grace and mercy. The Lord look upon you with favor and ☩ give you peace. **Amen.**