



Mount Calvary Connected

November 23, 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/

Readings & Sermon from the Past Sunday

Listen to the readings and the sermon from this past Sunday on our website: <https://www.mt-calvarylutheran.org/sermons/>

A Message from Pastor Jonathan

"Give thanks" or "thanksgiving," is one of those phrases that pops up quite frequently in scripture. In fact, just a quick search reveals over a hundred appearances throughout the old and new testaments.

It only makes sense that our American holiday of Thanksgiving would have a faith-related component to it; for some, this might be the only time they pray around a dinner table all year. But don't let that quick rattling off of things to be thankful for to be the only way your faith influences your celebration this Thanksgiving.

Consider "kindness..."

This past week, THOUSANDS of cookies arrived at Mount Calvary. Some were baked (some even baked by some of our youngest members of the church) and others were purchased, but when we asked for cookies, you literally delivered. And after worship, those cookies were packed into boxes and re-delivered, taken to local emergency services agencies and our congregation's "homebound" members.

For the first time doing this, the response was overwhelming, and I've already heard a lot of positive feedback. A friend who is a full-time employee at the Richland Township Fire Department texted me to tell me that one particular cookie was so "magically delicious" that he would shovel the baker's driveway all winter in order to get another plate of them!

So, thank you to everyone who helped out with that project in any way. In doing so, you performed a kindness that has impacted many, many people.

And therein lies my recommendation for you in the next few days. Instead of just rattling off something you're thankful for, consider the kindness you've seen in your life recently. What is something kind that someone has done for you in the past few days or weeks, and what is something kind you've done for someone else? That's what we'll be sharing around our table this year, and I hope you might, too. We can be thankful for the blessings we've received, but our faith calls us to share those blessings with others, too.

Happy Thanksgiving,
Pastor Jonathan

Upcoming Meetings/Events

Christmas Pageant Rehearsal Starts: November 27th

WELCA Spirit Sale Deadline: November 30th

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

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

Happy Thanksgiving!

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!

Coffee Hour

The evangelism team will be having a coffee hour the first Sunday of every month beginning December 3rd. We will be offering refreshments before the Sunday service from 8 a.m. until 8:45 a.m. Hope to see you there!

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://mtcalvarylutheranchurch.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.

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. Deadline to order is November 30th.

Visits to Shut-Ins, Hospital, or Nursing Home Patients

Never hesitate to contact the church office if you, or a loved one, desires a visit from one of our pastors, or a lay visitor. If you, or someone you know is homebound, hospitalized, or in a nursing/care home, and wants or needs a visit or more frequent visits, we are happy to do so. We never want anyone to be missed. We try to get information on those hospitalized or placed in nursing homes, but please don't assume that info is given to us automatically. Call us!

Scheduled Worship Help

Ushers:

Saturday, November 26: Dick and Anita Brodt

Sunday, November 27: Gary and Betty Schofield

Readers/Communion Assistants:

Saturday, November 26: Cindy Buday and Kevin Oleksa

Sunday, November 27: Ray Leverknight

Those interested in volunteering may contact Pastor Scott to sign up.

Children's Sunday School

Children's Sunday School for youth in preschool, elementary, and middle school is ongoing! See Pastor Jonathan for more information.

Thank You!

A big THANK YOU to those who baked and/or delivered cookies to our shut-ins and first responders. With everyone's help, we delivered almost 40 boxes to people who could really use a "pick me up!"

Christmas Pageant

Christmas pageant rehearsal will begin during Sunday School on November 27th.

The Christmas pageant will be on December 18th.

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.

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.

Lunch with Santa!

December 11th at noon

Enjoy free food, crafts, and a gift from Santa! Open to kids 12 and under. Please register by December 4th by calling the church office at 814-266-4859.

Giving Tree

November and December contributions will go towards the Helping Hands ministry.

Backyard Ministries Socks/Toys Collection

The Social Ministry Team would like to thank the congregation for filling all of the hat/glove bags for Backyard Ministries! It is greatly appreciated! Our next collection is for socks and toys. Please take a labeled bag, fill it with a pack of socks and a small toy, and return it to the bin in the narthex. All bags must be returned by Monday, December 19th to have them delivered in time for Christmas. Thank you for your continued support!

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.

Christmas Poinsettias

If you would like to purchase a Christmas poinsettia in memory of or in honor of someone, please fill out an envelope on the table in the Narthex. Colors to choose from are red, pink and white and the price of each is \$8.75. Orders must be handed in by November 28th.

You can also give a gift to World Hunger in memory of or in honor of someone. Those envelopes are also in the Narthex. Donations are due by December 11th, 2022.

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 Terrie 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 Terrie. Thanks for your cooperation!

Updates from Our Members & Community

Johnstown Campus Lutheran Home - Christmas gifts for residents

Name Angel tags are available if you want to buy a gift for a resident of the Johnstown Campus. Please call Lois Galus at 814-242-3470 to request a name for gift buying if you do not see her. Help make someone's Christmas special this year by giving a gift to a Johnstown Campus resident. If you have any questions, please call Lois at the above #.

Lutheran Disaster Response: Hurricane Ian Relief

Hurricane Ian made landfall in Florida on Sept. 28 with near Category 5-strength winds, dumping record amounts of rain and causing catastrophic, life-threatening flooding. The western coast of Florida was hit particularly hard. Wind gusts of over 130 mph have downed power lines, leaving millions of residents without power.

In response to Hurricane Ian, Lutheran Disaster Response is partnering with the Florida-Bahamas, Southeastern, North Carolina and South Carolina synods, as well as Lutheran Services Carolinas, to provide both immediate and long-term support. We anticipate relief will include water, food supplies, tarps, cleaning materials and other needs for those who have lost or damaged homes.

Your gifts will support survivors of Hurricane Ian. Gifts to "Hurricane Response" will be used in full (100%) to assist those affected by hurricanes until the response is complete.

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: November 27 – December 3, 2022**

Nov. 27 - Jonathan Perry & Gerald Pozun

Nov. 29 - Tori Sterner

Nov. 30 - Deborah Ferrin

Dec. 1 - Leslie Colvin & Cathy Gawlas

Dec. 2 - Erin Borodach & Alex Palasick

Dec. 3 - Kelly Costlow & Brittany Morgenstern

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, Linda Haberkorn, Lorraine, Joe, Donna, Danny & Family, Becky Jo, Bill, Linda & Family, Mary, Mary Jane, Janice, 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, Mary M., Joel Penrod, Tim Miller, Cathy T., Paul Brodt, & Kim Stayrook.

Financial Update

When the council gathered to review financial reports through the end of October, there was once again much good news to celebrate. Due to fluctuations in the financial marketplace, our overall financial holdings are down for the moment. But eventually, we'll find ourselves ahead of where we were a year ago. As for income, it's tracking slightly ahead of budget, with expenses under budget by an even greater degree. Thanks to the fine work of Mark Rychak and members of our Property Team

we recently received an insurance reimbursement for much of the damage done by inconsistencies in our electrical supply.

With the holiday season soon upon us, please remember that December is the month that makes or breaks the year. If you have fallen behind in your customary giving, or have not yet made your donation for the year, please do your best to catch up by the end of the year. Thus far, things have been coming along just fine. Let's make sure to keep it that way as the year closes and as large, year end expenses start to appear. Thanks in advance for your faithfulness and your generosity.

Condensed Worship for Sunday, November 20, 2022

Prayer of the Day

P: O God, our true life, to serve you is freedom, and to know you is unending joy. We worship you, we glorify you, we give thanks to you for your great glory. Abide with us, reign in us, and make this world into a fit habitation for your divine majesty, through Jesus Christ, our Savior and Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. **Amen.**

First Reading: Jeremiah 23:1-6

Woe to the shepherds who destroy and scatter the sheep of my pasture! says the Lord. Therefore thus says the Lord, the God of Israel, concerning the shepherds who shepherd my people: It is you who have scattered my flock, and have driven them away, and you have not attended to them. So I will attend to you for your evil doings, says the Lord. Then I myself will gather the remnant of my flock out of all the lands where I have driven them, and I will bring them back to their fold, and they shall be fruitful and multiply. I will raise up shepherds over them who will shepherd them, and they shall not fear any longer, or be dismayed, nor shall any be missing, says the Lord. The days are surely coming, says the Lord, when I will raise up for David a righteous Branch, and he shall reign as king and deal wisely, and shall execute justice and righteousness in the land. In his days Judah will be saved and Israel will live in safety. And this is the name by which he will be called: "The Lord is our righteousness."

P: The word of the Lord,

A: Thanks be to God!

Psalm 46

P: God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble.

A: Therefore we will not fear, though the earth be moved, and though the mountains shake in the depths of the sea;

P: though its waters rage and foam, and though the mountains tremble with its tumult.

A: There is a river whose streams make glad the city of God, the holy habitation of the Most High.

P: God is in the midst of the city; it shall not be shaken; God shall help it at the break of day.

A: The nations rage, and the kingdoms shake; God speaks, and the earth melts away.

P: The Lord of hosts is with us; the God of Jacob is our stronghold.

A: Come now, regard the works of the Lord, what desolations God has brought upon the earth;

P: behold the one who makes war to cease in all the world; who breaks the bow, and shatters the spear, and burns the shields with fire.

A: "Be still, then, and know that I am God; I will be exalted among the nations; I will be exalted in the earth."

P: The Lord of hosts is with us; the God of Jacob is our stronghold.

Second Reading: Colossians 1:11-20

May you be made strong with all the strength that comes from his glorious power, and may you be prepared to endure everything with patience, while joyfully giving thanks to the Father, who has enabled you to share in the inheritance of the saints in the light. He has rescued us from the power of darkness and transferred us into the kingdom of his beloved Son, in whom we have redemption, the forgiveness of sins.

He is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of all creation; for in him all things in heaven and on earth were created, things visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or rulers or powers—all things have been created through him and for him. He himself is before all things, and in him all things hold together. He is the head of the body, the church; he is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead, so that he might come to have first place in everything. For in him all the fullness of God was pleased to dwell, and through him God was pleased to reconcile to himself all things, whether on earth or in heaven, by making peace through the blood of his cross.

P: The word of the Lord,

A: Thanks be to God!

Gospel: Luke 23:33-43

When they came to the place that is called The Skull, they crucified Jesus there with the criminals, one on his right and one on his left. [Then Jesus said, “Father, forgive them; for they do not know what they are doing.”] And they cast lots to divide his clothing. And the people stood by, watching; but the leaders scoffed at him, saying, “He saved others; let him save himself if he is the Messiah of God, his chosen one!” The soldiers also mocked him, coming up and offering him sour wine, and saying, “If you are the King of the Jews, save yourself!” There was also an inscription over him, “This is the King of the Jews.”

One of the criminals who were hanged there kept deriding him and saying, “Are you not the Messiah? Save yourself and us!” But the other rebuked him, saying, “Do you not fear God, since you are under the same sentence of condemnation? And we indeed have been condemned justly, for we are getting what we deserve for our deeds, but this man has done nothing wrong.” Then he said, “Jesus,

remember me when you come into your kingdom.” He replied, “Truly I tell you, today you will be with me in Paradise.”

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 our King, Amen.

One of the most difficult funerals I ever preached was for an on-again, off-again drug addict who died of an overdose. Those circumstances in and of themselves would make it difficult, but to complicate things, I didn’t really know the young man who had passed away. It was a service that I was doing as a favor. And while my funeral planning process typically involves several hours of conversation with the family, more than enough to get a sense for who the person was during their life, the family was not particularly talkative. “Just a plain, traditional service...” was what I heard again and again.

I could tell that there were a lot of mixed feelings floating around about the young man, and in particular the way he had died. But my job wasn’t to dwell too much on that, my job was to preach the good news, to proclaim Christ crucified and risen, to talk about the divine promise of eternal life.

After meeting with the family, as I was preparing for that sermon, a specific Gospel lesson came to mind, one that I had never before used in a funeral sermon...

The passage from the Gospel of Luke that we hear from today.

It only made sense as people gathered together with mixed feelings to mourn the loss of a life cut short, to focus on these words of Jesus that emphasize that the divine promise of eternal life is for *everyone*. That we will *all* be brought home to paradise.

For those who aren’t aware, this weekend is the *end* of the year in the church calendar. Next Sunday we begin things anew with the first Sunday of Advent, but today, we celebrate the end with the Festival of Christ the King. We celebrate the fact that our Lord is not like any other King, Lord, or Emperor that the world had ever known, that the world *will* ever know.

Because, among other things, our Lord cared about the sort of people who no one else cared for.

This past spring, one of our neighbors graduated nursing school. And with nursing shortages all over the country, she probably had her pick of places to work. I don’t even know where all she may have applied, but the job she took kind of shocked me at first...

This 30-something mother of two accepted a job to be a nurse at the Westmoreland County Prison in Greensburg.

As I thought about it a bit more though, it did start to make a bit more sense... Her husband had been a corrections officer at a different jail for a few years, so obviously she was maybe a bit more comfortable and familiar with the setting than others would be.

And then I thought about it even more, and it struck me how truly remarkable taking a job as a prison nurse really is...

First of all, there's the risk factor; working with inmates in a county jail is probably just a bit more dangerous than caring for people in a hospital or nursing home. But then there's the reality that the patients you are caring for are people who will likely never be able to repay you, who are literally not even paying anyone for the care that you give them. And finally, the stone-cold truth, that those patients that you are caring for are the very same people that a significant chunk of society do not care for at all, that most people would say do not deserve any sort of care.

And that's when it hit me just how noble the work this young woman was doing. Caring for those whom hardly anyone else would ever care for. I ran into her one night recently as I was walking the dog and I told her that, I told her that it seemed obvious that she had found a calling in life, that she was doing God's work as she worked in that jail. And as a woman with a strong faith who goes to church every Sunday, I know that meant something to her.

Christ the King cared for people who no one else cared for. He was not the type of King that anyone expected, or thought they needed, but Jesus was the type of King that we deserved and the one that deep down we *did need*.

Now, that might be a halfway decent place to end a sermon, especially in these days before Thanksgiving, with the simple reminder that God calls us to care for all people, even those who the rest of the world doesn't.

But that's not where I want to stop, because I want to flip that moral on its head and circle back to where we started... The young man who died of an overdose.

Regardless of anyone's feelings about his life decisions and the way he died, I solemnly believe that people needed to hear this Gospel that day. To hear those words, "today you will be with me in paradise."

Jesus wasn't just giving lip-service to a man in a desperate situation, he was making a sincere and holy promise.

This man, who was seemingly being punished righteously for the crimes he had committed, who was despised by the community, *he recognized that Jesus was king*. He begged, "Jesus remember me when you come into your kingdom."

And Jesus responds, "...today you will be with me in paradise."

Christ cared for the lowest of the low, for the people whom no one else in society cared for.

And if Jesus can care for those people. If Jesus can make that sort of promise to a criminal hanging on a cross, is it so hard to believe that promise stands for us as well? Is it so hard to believe that Christ the king who cares for all people includes US in his all?

Even though it took a difficult funeral for *me* to realize the power and poignancy of this piece of the crucifixion story, my hope is that it might sink in a bit more easily for you. That each one of us is homeward bound, each one of us, through our baptism are inheritors of a great and wonderful promise. Christ has come into his Kingdom and we are invited to paradise with him, we are invited to join him at home.

Now that, that is GOOD news. THAT is worth celebrating. And as we prepare to begin welcome Christ into our homes yet again in the season of Advent and Christmas, that is where we should keep our eyes, that these homes we share here are only temporary, and Jesus will bring us to our true home at the end of our days. Amen.

Prayers of Intercession

P: United with your saints across time and place, we pray for our shared world.

P: We pray for your church. Embolden denominations and faith-based organizations in creative and collaborative ministries and increase our work for the sake of the gospel. Lord, in your mercy,

A: Receive our prayer.

P: We pray for the earth. Protect waterways from pollution and animal habitats from destruction.

Guide us in careful stewardship of waters, plant life, and animals. Lord, in your mercy,

A: Receive our prayer.

P: We pray for the nations of the world. Instill in every leader's heart a desire for justice and peace. Support the work of international collaborations that seek the goals of health and joy for all people. Lord, in your mercy,

A: Receive our prayer.

P: We pray for all who are undermined or oppressed. Amplify the voices of the unheard and break open stubborn systems of injustice. Bring about your righteousness and fill us all with your redeeming light. Lord, in your mercy,

A: Receive our prayer.

P: We pray for this assembly. Guide our pastors, deacons, and council members in discernment, and nurture new leaders with fresh ideas. Give this congregation a spirit of discipleship and service. Lord, in your mercy,

A: Receive our prayer.

P: We give thanks for all who have died in the faith. Console us who mourn and comfort us with the beautiful promise of life in your kingdom. Lord, in your mercy,

A: Receive our prayer.

P: Accept these prayers, gracious God, and those known only to you; through Jesus Christ, our Lord.

A: Amen.

Blessing

P: 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.**