



Mount Calvary Connected

December 1, 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 Adams

A week or so ago, our four year old daughter Annabelle found a container of anointing oil in my pickup truck on the way home from church. I vaguely remember her asking what it was, but I quickly snatched it out of her hands, afraid that she might somehow manage to open it and spill the oil all over the inside of the truck. In the moment I think I very briefly explained to her that the oil was something I used to bless and pray for people, especially when they were sick.

The very next day, as we were driving up Route 219 on the way to preschool, she started asking me to "_____ people." The problem was, I couldn't actually understand what she was asking me to do; the word in the blank was not one I had ever heard her use, and she was obviously struggling a bit to even say it.

Finally, after a bit of back and forth, I realized she was asking me to BLESS people, "you know, with that thing from church I found yesterday!"

"Bless people! Tell them God loves them. And if they're my friends, tell them I love them too!"

Here's the thing: this could be just another cute story about a preacher's kid, and if you're my friend on Facebook, you may have already read this, but what happened later that same day makes it so much more...

When I picked Annabelle up from preschool at the end of the day, SHE ASKED ME, "Daddy, did you bless people today like I asked you to?"

I almost cried. I had led a funeral for a very beloved lifelong member of Benscreek that day, probably the oldest member of the church at the time of her passing. I was exhausted. And I had to admit to my four year old, "no, daddy didn't use the blessing oil today."

She paused for a moment, and said, "that's okay daddy, words can be a blessing, too."

And so, in honor of my darling daughter, I pass along her blessing: God loves you. Don't forget it.

And know that YOUR words can be a blessing to others, as well.

Yours in Christ,
Pastor Jonathan

Upcoming Meetings/Events

Coffee Social: Dec. 4th at 8:00 a.m.

Volunteer @ Family Kitchen: Dec. 4th 11-1

Last day to register for Santa Lunch: Dec. 4th

Stewardship/Admin. Committee: Dec. 7th at 6:30 p.m.

Lunch with Santa: Dec. 11th at noon

WELCA Lunch at Perkins: Dec. 12th at 11 a.m.

Property Committee: Dec. 13th at 6:00 p.m.

Children's Christmas Pageant: Dec. 18th at 8:45 a.m.

Last day for sock/toy collection: Dec. 18th

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

Christmas Eve Services: Dec. 24th at 4:00, 7:00, & 10:00 p.m.

Hymns & Lesson: Dec. 25th at 8:45 a.m.

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!

Scheduled Worship Help

Ushers:

Saturday, December 3: Dave and Stacey Saloka

Sunday, December 4: Noelle Berkey and Kierisa Hockensmith

Saturday, December 10: Kevin and Chris Oleksa

Sunday, December 11: Noelle Berkey and Kierisa Hockensmith

Saturday, December 17: Dave and Stacey Saloka

Sunday, December 18: Todd and Jill Moss

Saturday, December 24:

4:00: Mark and Deb Rychak

7:00: Kevin and Chris Oleksa

10:00: Todd and Jill Moss

Sunday, December 25: Todd Moss and helper

Readers/Communion Assistants:

Saturday, December 3: Cindy Solarczyk and Jack Weisbrodt

Sunday, December 4: Sean Horn

Saturday, December 10: Bill and Jan Layton

Sunday, December 11: Tiffany Swartz

Saturday, December 17: Courtney Haluska and Kevin Oleksa

Sunday, December 18: Deborah McQuaide

Saturday, December 24:

4:00: Pastors

7:00: Kadiya Lingenfelter and Deborah McQuaide

10:00: Hayden and Mari Grace Lingenfelter

Sunday, December 25: 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.

Christmas Pageant

There is still time for preschool and elementary-aged children to be a part of our December 18th Christmas Pageant. Practice is held at 8:30 a.m. Sunday mornings. There are parts for all, regardless of ability or “shyness”.

“Failing and falling”

By Yolanda Pierce

I recently attended a dynamic workshop for administrators in higher education, facilitated by a psychologist. I confess that I went reluctantly, exhausted by a full academic year during a global pandemic, which is changing and shifting everything in the postsecondary education world. Spending a full day in an enclosed space, filled with strangers, while wearing a mask for eight hours felt like a grueling end to what was already a very hard year. But God often shows up in our weary spaces.

Each workshop participant had to do an exercise in which we listed the things that we had failed at over the course of our careers. The failures among this group were numerous: failed classes and failed relationships; failed bar exams and failed businesses; failed comprehensive exams and failed dissertation defenses. And yet, an outsider looking at this group would have considered each one of us a success story. Most of us were excelling in our careers as administrators, professors, and educators. Many were thriving parents, spouses, and partners—achieving some measure of work-life balance and personal success in the midst of very demanding careers. We were the mentors and the advisers, the people with answers to questions from students and colleagues. And we all had long lists of failures to share with each other.

Of all the things we did that day, this one exercise of listing my failures has stayed with me. I know myself to be a person who is haunted by her failures, who does not let go of them easily, and I struggle not to judge myself solely by what I haven't achieved. Enumerating my list of failings, naming them one by one, was a stark reminder that I have failed at many things—including some very important things. I failed to win that highly coveted fellowship or to earn that once-in-a-lifetime job appointment. I failed to check in regularly on my friend who is battling severe depression or to visit our elderly family matriarch each time I traveled to her city. I failed at getting the grant, failed at negotiating for what I'm worth, failed at securing the bag when making a deal. I've failed to burn some bridges that needed to be burned, and I've failed to give a second chance when a heartfelt apology was offered.

When I do the math, when I am brutally honest, my failures easily outnumber my wins. I confess to spending no small amount of time lamenting where I could be in life, who I could be, if I had not failed at some pivotal moments. It is humbling to accept that perhaps whoever we are, right at this very moment, is a reflection of the sum total of our failures and not just our successes.

But this is where God's grace enters the picture. It tears up my list of failings and messes and reminds me how all things can work together so I may know the fullness of life. Each failure has been a learning experience and a building block in my spiritual journey. Each failure has led to a new discovery about myself and others. I am learning about genuine friendship, loyalty, and trust because of failed friendships, failed loyalty, and failed trust. I am learning to bloom where I am planted, even in the midst of closed doors and missed opportunities. I am learning to extend grace when others fail me, even as I need grace for my own broken promises and unkind acts. I am learning that while I have failed and will fail, again and again, I am still a beloved child of God. Not even my mistakes and missteps can separate me from God's love.

I also admit that there have been seasons where my faith has failed, when I've railed against God's seeming absence and indifference. There are moments when the sacred scripture and familiar hymns are unable to provide comfort or give me hope that justice will ever prevail. In these moments of doubt, when my very faith fails to support me, I don't run away from the brutal truth that is revealed: failing, like doubt, is inevitable, so I have to focus my energy not on the number of times I've fallen but on those occasions in which I've gotten up, again and again. Even while still feeling the sting of rejection and failure, I must choose to apply again, or to love again, or to trust again.

That is why the song currently stuck in my head is Donnie McClurkin's "We Fall Down," with its simple reminder that "a saint is just a sinner who fell down and got up." The gospel singer keeps repeating the same charge: "Get back up again." These words have been a balm to my soul. It is my nature to want to explain and dissect each failure, to figure out what went wrong and why. Like everyone, I want to know why I failed when it seemed like I tried my hardest, did my very best, or loved the most. But there are often no answers forthcoming to these questions.

Faith is choosing to get back up again even if you may never know why life knocked you down. Failing and falling are unavoidable. My hope is in a God who gives me the grace and desire to get up and try again.

Yolanda Pierce is dean and professor at Howard University School of Divinity

Backyard Ministries Socks/Toys Collection

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 before December 18th. Thank you for your continued support!

World Hunger

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

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 #.

Thank You to Wilma Hiltz

We want to say "thank you" to Wilma Hiltz as she retires from her leadership of the Prayer Chain. If you have asked for prayers at any time, it would've gone through Wilma. She was truly devoted and prayerful in her commitment to her church family! It was once said, "If Wilma prays for you, you know you were lifted in prayer." Her love of God, family, and church is shown in all she does. We have been graced by her leadership for more years than we realize. She is one of the first to ask how you and your family are doing; knowing you have gone through something she and others have taken up in prayer. The prayer chain is a group of devoted people who realize the power of prayer! We know Wilma will continue to pray for those in need and we will pray for Wilma in her "retirement" from a position she carried out with much grace and love. Thank you, Wilma!

-Your Mt. Calvary church family and the members of the Prayer Chain

Altar Guild

We are reorganizing for 2023. We can never have too many helpers for this important service, so if we haven't approached you yet, please tell anyone you see cleaning up after services that you'd like to help. Join us any time. We'll show you what to do!

Alpha Course

Mt. Calvary will be hosting the Alpha Course beginning February 21st. The 11 weekly sessions will explore Christian faith. Watch for sign-up information in early 2023.

Birthdays and Anniversaries for the Week: December 4 – December 10, 2022

Dec. 6 - Joan Hunter & Adam Pozun

Dec. 7 - Rebecca Daly

Dec. 8 - Jill Lisson & Betty Schofield

Dec. 10 - Doris Thomas

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.

Condensed Worship for Sunday, November 27, 2022

Prayer of the Day

P: Stir up your power, Lord Christ, and come. By your merciful protection, save us from the threatening dangers of our sins and enlighten our walk in the way of your salvation, for you live and reign with the Father and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. **Amen.**

First Reading: Isaiah 2:1-5

The word that Isaiah son of Amoz saw concerning Judah and Jerusalem. In days to come the mountain of the Lord's house shall be established as the highest of the mountains, and shall be raised above the hills; all the nations shall stream to it. Many peoples shall come and say, "Come, let us go up to the mountain of the Lord, to the house of the God of Jacob; that he may teach us his ways and that we may walk in his paths." For out of Zion shall go forth instruction, and the word of the Lord from Jerusalem. He shall judge between the nations, and shall arbitrate for many peoples; they shall beat their swords into plowshares, and their spears into pruning hooks; nation shall not lift up sword against nation, neither shall they learn war any more. O house of Jacob, come, let us walk in the light of the Lord!

P: The word of the Lord,

A: Thanks be to God!

Psalm 122

P: I was glad when they said to me, "Let us go to the house of the Lord."

A: Now our feet are standing within your gates, O Jerusalem.

P: Jerusalem is built as a city that is at unity with itself;

A: to which the tribes go up, the tribes of the Lord, the assembly of Israel, to praise the name of the Lord.

P: For there are the thrones of judgment, the thrones of the house of David.

A: Pray for the peace of Jerusalem: "May they prosper who love you.

P: Peace be within your walls and quietness within your towers.

A: For the sake of my kindred and companions, I pray for your prosperity.

P: Because of the house of the Lord our God, I will seek to do you good.”

Second Reading: Romans 13:11-14

Besides this, you know what time it is, how it is now the moment for you to wake from sleep. For salvation is nearer to us now than when we became believers; the night is far gone, the day is near. Let us then lay aside the works of darkness and put on the armor of light; let us live honorably as in the day, not in reveling and drunkenness, not in debauchery and licentiousness, not in quarreling and jealousy. Instead, put on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make no provision for the flesh, to gratify its desires.

P: The word of the Lord,

A: Thanks be to God!

Gospel: Matthew 24:36-44

[Jesus said to the disciples,] “About that day and hour no one knows, neither the angels of heaven, nor the Son, but only the Father. For as the days of Noah were, so will be the coming of the Son of Man. For as in those days before the flood they were eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage, until the day Noah entered the ark, and they knew nothing until the flood came and swept them all away, so too will be the coming of the Son of Man. Then two will be in the field; one will be taken and one will be left. Two women will be grinding meal together; one will be taken and one will be left. Keep awake therefore, for you do not know on what day your Lord is coming. But understand this: if the owner of the house had known in what part of the night the thief was coming, he would have stayed awake and would not have let his house be broken into. Therefore you also must be ready, for the Son of Man is coming at an unexpected hour.”

P: The gospel of the Lord.

A: Praise to you, O Christ!

Sermon by Pastor Scott Klimke

Today, our featured gospel is not Luke as it has been for much of the last year. Today we get Matthew. In one week, we’ve gone from St. Luke describing how from the cross, Jesus promised a repentant criminal paradise to St. Matthew, predicting that judgment will eventually come upon those who have fallen asleep in their faith. That’s quite a change; from grace and forgiveness and salvation to judgment in just one week. It’s almost as if the season of Advent and the start of a new Church year have shown up like a thief in the night.

If this has happened, it would be fitting. Both directly and indirectly, Advent takes up the unfinished business of God. During Advent, we’re reminded of all of God’s “not yet’s.” We still get the “already” that tells us Christ has died and Christ is risen. But God’s “not yet’s” do become more prominent during

Advent, even as the previous Church year found us bearing witness to those “not yet’s” by confessing, “Christ will come again.” And with the “not yet’s” more prominent during Advent comes another variable in our faith life beyond “already” and beyond “not yet.” It’s the variable we can perhaps sum up as “who knows.”

I mean, with Advent directing our attention to somewhere over the rainbow, how do we describe a future that’s not yet here; that’s still not concrete and tangible? The honest answer is: Who knows! Or what about this: How do you anticipate or lean into a heaven and an earth so dissimilar from our present that Scripture calls them entirely new? Once again, the honest answer is: Who knows? With Elon Musk in the news a lot as of late, we might compare the questions raised by Advent’s “not yet’s” to the task of manufacturing a driverless vehicle that works and is safe for everyone. How are Tesla and other like-minded companies ever going to get us to such a vehicle? Again, who knows! And if one technological development lies beyond our comprehension and reach, why would we ever think we could describe or anticipate how it is the nations shall one day beat their swords into plowshares and their spears into pruning hooks? Who knows! Advent brings these words to our lips a lot. It’s what happens as a matter of course when we start to think about all of God’s “not yet’s” as we do during Advent.

As one indication of how Advent and all of its “not yet’s” lead us to say and to think, “Who knows,” look no farther than our reading from Isaiah. This reading delivers a master class on the limits of human knowledge and comprehension. In its entirety, our first reading drawn from the second chapter of Isaiah is a “who knows.” For this to sink in, we first have to consider what happens later in the book of Isaiah.

By the fortieth chapter of Isaiah, Judah and Jerusalem will lie in ruins; with most of their citizenry forcibly relocated by the Babylonian Empire. Later on in the book of Isaiah, beginning with chapter fifty-six or so, those Babylon has forcibly displaced shall return to their homeland and come face to face and heart to heart with the massive rebuilding project they have on their hands. And yet, our reading from Isaiah insists Judah and Jerusalem shall rise from the rubble and ashes they have become. In spite of the blitzkrieg unleashed by the Babylonian Empire, our first reading today insists that Judah and Jerusalem shall experience a resurrection and rebirth so profound that they shall end up at the top of the world; with nation after nation and people after people repenting and taking up the peaceful ways of Judah and Jerusalem’s God.

To give it a modern spin, try sharing what Isaiah has to say today with the bombed-out residents of Ukraine. Right now, an apartment, some water, an electrical current would be most welcome. But addressing another war-torn people and region, our reading from Isaiah promises way more than this. Reduced to rubble and ashes, Judah and Jerusalem shall become the epicenter of civilization; locales that shall somehow, someday unite a hostile and divided world in peace. How’s it going happen? The honest answer is: Who knows? But somehow, someday the prophet’s overall vision shall be achieved. In this respect, the “who knows” of Advent call us to be defiantly hopeful. Advent tells us that what matters in the end isn’t what we know. In fact, Advent tells us that what matters in the end isn’t even a what. It’s a who. The God of love who shall not give up on what began with Judah and Jerusalem until a

new heaven and a new earth arrive; until swords are beat into plowshares and spears into pruning hooks. But even so, as all the “who knows” of Advent call us to be defiantly hopeful, they at the same time call us to be measured and humble.

Earlier, I said the prophet’s overall vision would be fulfilled one way or another. This is quite different than saying every last element of Isaiah’s vision shall be fulfilled. Frankly, there’s a lot which seems to stand in the way of some elements of what the prophets had to say today. For one, there’s presently not a lot to suggest that Judah and Jerusalem are set up to become the epicenter of world peace. Just a couple of days ago, bombs went off in Jerusalem killing some Jews and injuring others. Just a day earlier, Jewish forces gunned down a Palestinian teenager and injured many other people. Does this really seem like a place primed to be the epicenter of world peace? Ultimately, we have to say, “Who knows!” But there certainly is that which raises questions about some of the particulars of Isaiah’s prophecy.

There’s also the fact that the house of God in Jerusalem referenced by our reading from Isaiah no longer exists. This non-existent Temple is where the nations and the peoples of the world were to go for instructions on peace. What’s more is that a Muslim shrine and mosque now sits where Jerusalem’s Temple once stood. As a prelude to what Isaiah describes as world peace, would God really raze one place of worship, and a holy shrine at that, to replace it with another place of worship. Again, we ultimately have to say, “Who knows!” But there does seem to be that which might stand in the way of the fulfillment of every last detail of Isaiah’s vision. In the end, there’s no doubt that what God began with Judah and Jerusalem shall continue until there’s a new heaven and a new earth; until every last sword and spear have been refashioned for peaceful purposes. But at the same time, I think we have to acknowledge that the path to the final consummation of God’s plan may in the end differ in some ways from the path imagined by Isaiah. On the level of particulars, it really is a “who knows!” And for me, this says we ought to be mighty humble and reserved about how we apply not the overall message of Scripture, but some of its particulars in real time and space. Having to say, “Who knows” a good bit, we might want to refrain from claiming and insisting that we know more than we in fact do know.

Quite tragically, this doesn’t always happen. Just a couple of verses here or there can send congregations and individuals down a path where they assume the role of Judge. As we feel these judgmental tendencies rising in us, it behooves us to remember that God isn’t a verse here or a verse there. The Lord of all, including the pages and words of Scripture, God is the One who often calls us to say, “Who knows,” not just in hopeful wonder, but also with humble reserve. Rather than sowing division based upon a verse here or a verse there, it seems to me it would be far more profitable and preferable to devote ourselves to the significant number of verses which call us to be agents of healing and peace and reconciliation. In today’s reading from Romans, we have some of these verses. They tell us we lay aside the works of darkness and put on the armor of light by saying goodbye to quarrels and jealousy and all the other stuff that leads to division. And as I’ve said, today’s reading from Romans is just one of the many, many places we hear this said in Scripture. As a whole, Scripture calls us to love, not to hate and division. Maybe, just maybe, remembering how often God and God’s word prompts us to say, “Who knows,” might leave us a little more ready to love and far less ready to judge, exclude, and divide. Who knows! It’s at least worth a try. Amen!

Prayers of Intercession

P: As we prepare for the fullness of Christ's presence, let us pray for a world that yearns for new hope.

P: God of all, your children everywhere cry out for mercy. Awaken the global church to the urgent needs of our time. Break down barriers of culture and custom and unite people of all faiths in your redemptive and healing work. God, in your mercy,

A: Hear our prayer.

P: God of wonder, the earth's beauty and abundance is your gift. Teach us your ways of sharing resources and caring for life. Guard fragile habitats, preserve the wild places, and protect endangered plants and animals. God, in your mercy,

A: Hear our prayer.

P: God of peace, you judge the nations. Beat our weapons into tools for serving the neighbor. Strengthen the resolve of all who work for an end to war. We pray for lasting peace in the land of Jesus' birth. God, in your mercy,

A: Hear our prayer.

P: God of lovingkindness, you desire fullness of life for everyone. Fill those who hunger. Comfort the grieving and attend to those near death. Bring help and hope to any who are sick or needing your care (especially). God, in your mercy,

A: Hear our prayer.

P: God of community, you are present when we gather in your name. Guide congregations in transition or conflict. Give wisdom to congregational councils, call committees, and ministry leaders. Keep us alert to unexpected opportunities for mission. God, in your mercy,

A: Hear our prayer.

P: God of promise, your goodness is everlasting. We give thanks for the lives of the faithful who now rest in you. We trust that you will bring us into the company of all the saints with rejoicing. God, in your mercy,

A: Hear our prayer.

P: God of our longing, you know our deepest needs. By your Spirit, gather our prayers and join them with the prayers of all your children. In Jesus' name we pray.

A: Amen.

Blessing

P: May God, who gathers us in love, lead you in pathways of righteousness and justice. May God, who knows us more deeply than we know ourselves, lead you in pathways of forgiveness and freedom. May God, who fills us with good things, lead you in pathways of equity and abundance. The blessing of the holy Trinity, † one God, be upon you and remain with you forever. **Amen.**