

# FROM THE MOUNT



## Mount Calvary Lutheran Church

THE LUTHERAN CHURCH - MISSOURI SYNOD



2018

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And we impart this in words not taught by  
human wisdom but taught by the Spirit,  
interpreting spiritual truths to those who are  
spiritual.

– 1 Corinthians 2:13

Dear Friends in Christ,

**We** hold education and knowledge in very high esteem in our culture. Think of how many years of your life have been dedicated to getting “an education”. Of course learning is not something we ever outgrow, but usually when we think of education we think of that formal process of learning that starts with our first day of school and ends with that final diploma that we earn.

We have all benefited from our accumulation of knowledge whether it be from the convenience of “smart phones” to areas of expertise such as medicine that make such a vital difference in our lives. I remember in my childhood being enamored with Star Trek and Dr. McCoy who had a range of diagnostic tools with which to examine his patients. Now some thirty years later the ability of medical professions to understand what is going on inside of us can at times be very amazing and life changing.

So it can be easy to forget that not necessarily everything that is important about life can be known in these traditional and so fruitful ways of knowing that we becoming very used to. But Epiphany reminds us that there is still much mystery to life that is beyond our ability to look inside the universe and life to understand. We still do not understand why sometimes certain things fall upon one and not another. We don’t always understand what motivates people. We don’t even always understand what motivates ourselves. And no person has been able to penetrate behind the mystery of the veil of death and say from the viewpoint of scientific and traditional techniques for knowledge what is beyond.

Epiphany is a season in which hidden truth is revealed and no longer kept hidden. For us, as we proceed through the Sundays following Christmas, Epiphany is the season where the mystery of God as seen

in Christ is slowly unpacked for us showing us that God is, that God loves, and that God is "for us". One might make a compelling argument for God's existence using more traditional knowledge but to say that God loves us and is for us is something that we can know only because He has shown us.

God shows us that He is "for us" in the person of His Son. The whole purpose of Christmas was that God be "for us". Jesus would come to the world for us. He would fulfill the law in our place for us. He would go to the cross and die for our sin. He would forgive us, a gift that is freely bestowed for us. He makes eternal life a reality for us. It is all "for us" that is "for you"!

You can know because it is revealed, shown to us through God's Holy Word.

No person can see or know everything for no one can experience all things nor even understand all things. Our ability to know and understand is limited and even sometimes faulty. Even our combined efforts, all of us together, have not penetrated so many mysteries of the universe. And that is OK because our eternal destiny does not depend our discovering or making a way to get there. Our eternal destiny was decided long ago by Jesus and is revealed to us, shown us, as His gift through His Word. If that Word doesn't always make sense to us, that's OK, it is still true and holds firm. If that Word seems to contradict something we thought we knew or understood, that's OK for we are limited and faulty, God Word is still true and holds firm. If that Word is disbelieved by the people who live in the world who would rather follow their own limited knowledge, that's OK to. God's Word is still true and holds firm.

Truth is truth. The truth of God is revealed. God is. God loves and God is for you, now and forever. Your sin is forgiven. You are promised eternal life. This is truth revealed, not discovered and not created, but received.

May God bless you with the truth of His Word.

Christ bless you richly and abundantly family of God.

*Pastor David Rees*



## **San Antonio is Getting New LCMS Churches! What Does This Mean for Mount Calvary?**

"Thy Kingdom Come" - We say this phrase every week when we pray the Lord's Prayer. But sometimes we miss the meaning this idea communicates. God is already ruling in His kingdom of power as He oversees the whole universe, and He is already ruling in His kingdom of glory as He is worshiped by the church triumphant and the angels in heaven. The focus of this particular petition is on the church on earth as we pray for God's kingdom of grace to come. The catechism tells us that "God's kingdom comes when our heavenly Father gives us His Holy Spirit, so that by His grace we believe His holy Word and lead godly lives here in time and there in eternity," (SC, LP, 2nd Petition). By the Holy Spirit's power and by the grace of God, we are enabled to believe in God and lead lives of faith. The explanation of the petition elaborates that in this petition we are also praying for God to bring many others into His kingdom and that he would use us to extend that same kingdom.

Kingdom growth is a fascinating subject. It is not necessarily focused on church growth, although sometimes the growth of membership happens alongside the growth of the kingdom. On the first Sunday of January I spoke a little bit about these two concepts. I mentioned that in my three years as a pastor here at Mount Calvary, we have experienced a negative gain in baptized membership. That might seem a little odd when we look at the number of people in attendance in worship, so let me explain. I am excluding the number of people who have transferred into our church **or** out of it. The number I was interested in was an indication of how many people have started their race of faith through baptism here at Mount Calvary and how many members had finished their race of faith by going to heaven to be with the Lord. The numbers indicate that from 2015 to 2017 Mount Calvary had 30 baptisms and 45 deaths. That is one-and-a-half funerals for every baptism. Since the population of our area is not decreasing at a similar rate (rather, it is *increasing*), we must conclude that these numbers indicate a negative gain in Kingdom growth.

When someone transfers peacefully from another congregation, we are quite happy to have them join our church family. In fact, my own family came to Mount Calvary as transfers from another LCMS church! But a new member who enters the congregation through membership transfer should not be confused for growth of the Kingdom. They were *already* our brothers and sisters in Christ, even from afar. Obviously, there are exceptions to this rule (for example someone who was baptized but left the church and then returned), but largely it applies. If this trend of more funerals than baptisms was happening in every church, we would certainly have reason to be concerned. The good news is that churches do exist that have more baptisms than funerals: *new* churches.

Church planting is exploding in the Texas District of the LCMS. There are church planting networks in place in Houston, Dallas, Fort Worth, Austin, and now even San Antonio is experiencing the first church plant in fifteen years! Now it might be tempting for established churches to feel a little threatened by a new church starting in their city, so I thought I might share some wonderful news for Mount Calvary – research shows that a new church starting not only helps grow the kingdom of God and grow a new church, but it helps the established churches in that vicinity to grow, too! Here's how this works:

Established congregations have certain traditions that become solidified over time (things like the length of the service, the topics of the sermons, the leadership style, etc.) and these congregations therefore tend to reflect the preferences of longtime leaders from older generations. Consequently, younger adults, new residents, and new socio-cultural groups are disproportionately found in newer congregations. This tendency of established churches certainly impacts the makeup of new churches – studies estimate that 60-80% of members at new churches plants were unchurched or dechurched prior to being reached by the new congregation. This makes sense if you think about the time your family moved to a new city when you were in grade school. If you were lucky enough for the move to happen in the summer, you were able to start the next grade in school at the same time everybody else was, so it was easy to make friends and find a new group to be a part of. However, if your family

moved after the school year had already started, breaking into a group and making new friends was much more difficult. New churches are like a “new school year,” making it easier for new people to find their place in the congregation.

Studies show that when a church is 10-15 years old, they begin to gain 80-90% of their members by transfer from other congregations. Part of the reason this occurs is that as the congregation ages there is an internal pressure to use resources and energy to serve the members rather than those who are not yet members. That’s not necessarily a bad thing! Established congregations can provide programs and features that new churches simply do not have the resources to provide. Our wonderful music program here at Mount Calvary would never be found at a new church because the resources simply aren’t there. We have a trained resource person for students with special needs on our staff here at Mount Calvary, and unfortunately a new church probably couldn’t afford such a position. Established churches like Mount Calvary serve a *very* necessary role in God’s Kingdom! And they serve a *very different* role than a new church.

While a new congregation may not have the same resources as an established congregation, one of the benefits of a new congregation is that focusing on reaching the unchurched and dechurched is essential for the church plant to survive. Another benefit is that the church is much more in-tune to the needs of nonbelievers. Because many of the new church’s leaders come from the ranks of the very recently unchurched. The golden standard in church statistics for measuring whether or not a congregation is evangelizing (that is sharing the Gospel with their family, friends, and coworkers who don’t yet know the Lord) is adult baptisms. If unchurched people are being reached, adult baptisms will occur. Among LCMS congregations, new churches have far more adult baptisms than established congregations do.

Each type of congregation has its own strength, and each is necessary for the other. As a new church reaches new people, some of those members will decide that their family has needs that would be better

met by an established congregation. Perhaps they prefer a traditional congregation with a phenomenal music program and active Bible studies for all ages! If so, the new church would refer these members to Mount Calvary and all of the sudden Mount Calvary is experiencing growth too! Established congregations provide stability to new churches in their city. The established church is an anchor that keeps its church plants from being overwhelmed by the storms of the challenges of ministry. They are a life-line of support in the form of prayers, resources, and finances. Established congregations have been blessed by the Lord with the means of doing ministry to their members. Blessing a new congregation with prayers, resources, and finances not only helps the new church and the established church grow, it provides for kingdom growth.

Many ways, God's Kingdom is already coming among us in our state and even in our very city. I encourage you to check out the Texas District LCMS website for updates on the way God's kingdom is growing through church planting. And as San Antonio experiences these new church plants, let us all pray heartily together, "Thy Kingdom Come!"

In Christ,

Pastor Mark T. Pulliam

## **Memorials**

### **In memory of:**

Ruth Faubion

Marie Louise Sanders

Her mother

Mona Preuss

Frank C. Hensley, Jr

Jerry Hensley

Karen Roberts

Eva Gaspy

### **Given by:**

M/M Marshall Leiber, M/M Charles Koch

Muriel England

Linda Van Dyke

M/M Don Morris

Doris Hensley, Sharon Hensley

Sharon Hensley

Helen R. Crews

M/M Robert Axtell, M/m Marshall Leiber, Olga McGlothing, Gerald Smetzer, Carol Wilson, M/M Charles Koch, Elaine Ward, M/M Ralph Domel



# cam

christian  
assistance  
ministry

Thank you Mt. Calvary for your generosity during the "Share the Harvest" food drive sponsored by CAM. We delivered a huge car load of food items to the ministry including items for the little ones. With the generous monetary donation from *Friends in Christ* dozens upon dozens of

undergarments were purchased. What a privilege it is to be a part of a giving group of people.

From January through March CAM will have a "Soles-4-Souls" Drive. You can bring your gently used shoes for children ages 5 to 10; men's steel toed boots, work boots or tennis shoes; women's flats or no skid shoes to the collection bin in the Parish Hall. CAM is in desperate need of these types of shoes.

As an overview of how many lives have been touched by the giving heart of individuals, here are some statistics:

- **20,000** families and individuals with groceries
- **20,000** families and individuals with clothing including
- **15,000** homeless individuals with sack lunches
- **500** people find a place to receive their mail
- **200** children with specific school supplies
- **3,400** people with spiritual support including prayer, a Bible or a Bible study
- **6,800** people with financial assistance to purchase an ID, utility assistance to avoid disconnect or help pay for prescription medications and transportation

With gratitude,

Muriel England and Cathy DeVries, Mt. Calvary Representatives

## MORNING CLASSES

- **Adult Bible Class** | This large, lecture-style class meets in the gym and is taught by Pastor Reedy. On September 3rd, this class will look at the next chapter in the book of Romans. Upon conclusion, this class will begin a study of The Theology of Martin Luther (by Paul Althaus).
- **Bread of Life Adult Class** | This class is smaller and meets in the Parish Hall, allowing for more discussion. This class is led by Wanda & Larry Laxson. Sunday, November 5, the class will begin the video lecture series "The Fall of the Pagans and the Origins of Medieval Christianity."
- **PreK through College** | Children and students in are divided into classes that teach the Bible in age-appropriate ways. We offer classes specific to: PreK-K (small gym classroom), 1st-2nd (room 210), 3rd-4th (room 206), 5th-6th (Pre-Confirmation, room 204), 7th-8th (Confirmation, room 208), High School & College (room 218), Special Education (room 112), and Nursery (room 117)

## MIDWEEK CLASSES

- **Adult Information Class (AIC)** | *Every Wednesday beginning August 23rd | 7:00-8:30pm | Church library*  
New to Lutheranism? Just want to brush up on the basics? This is the class for you! Each course is 10 sessions. This class will begin January 24th at 7:00pm. Classes will be at 8:00pm during Lent. Speak to Pastor Reedy if interested.
- **Pastor Mark's Bible Study (Morning)** | *Every Tuesday | 10:00-11:30 am | Room 212 (upstairs)*  
We will resume January 9th with the evangelism training curriculum, "Everyone His Witness." Sign up today in the Parish Hall lobby. Childcare available.
- **Men's Bible Study** | *1st & 3rd Saturdays | 8:00-9:30 am | Parish Hall*  
Nothing starts the weekend off right like breakfast tacos, coffee, and Christian fellowship! This group is led by Jeff Harwood and will be continuing their study of the intertestamental books of the Apocrypha. On September 2<sup>nd</sup> this class will look at the wit and wisdom of Ecclesiasticus.
- **Triple F Men's Bible Study** | *Mondays beginning September 11th | 6:30-pm | Cheddar's, IH35 in Selma*  
A new men's Bible study followed by fellowship/food.
- **Women's Bible Study** | *3rd Mondays | 7:30-8:30 pm | Meets at members' homes*  
Talk to Shirley Wille for more information.
- **Mothers' ChristCare Small Group** | *2nd & 4th Mondays | 6:30-8:00 pm | Room 218 (upstairs)*  
This group is led by Wanda Laxson and is a great way for moms to get to

know one another and be encouraged for the coming week! This class resumes September 11th. We will be completing "The Vine Speaks."

● **Night ChristCare Small Group** | 1st Thursdays | 7:00-8:30 pm |  
*Miyauchi Home*

This group is led by Jan Miyauchi and meets at 2219 Peach Blossom. Join us on September 7th as we determine what we will study.

● **Other** | TBA

Would you like to participate in a study but don't know where to begin? Contact the church office for more details about any of these classes or to let us know if a class at another time or in another location might be beneficial to you and a few friends. We'd love to provide support for starting a Bible study in your workplace, neighborhood, or school!

**The annual Congregational Meeting will** be February 11<sup>th</sup> during the Education Hour. A complimentary breakfast will be served. Come get an update on 2017 and what plans we have for 2018.

Dear Mt. Calvary,

Linda and I would like to thank everybody for the well wishes we received on our 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary. Pastor Reedy did a fantastic job in officiating. We received many comments on how beautifully it was conducted. It was great to see so many friends and fellow members of Mount Calvary at the reception that followed.

With love in Christ.

Gary and Linda Franzen

## **ELDERS FOR JANUARY**

	<u>8:30 a.m.</u>	<u>11:00 a.m.</u>
January 7 (communion)	John Smetzer	Jim Koenig
January 14	Jim McNeel	Gary Franzen
January 21 (communion)	Jason Strawn	Mike Wille
January 29	Russell Maxwell	Walter Marks

## **USHERS FOR JANUARY**

<u>8:30 a.m.</u>	<u>11:00 a.m.</u>
Ralph Domel	Rex Rheiner
Don Lundy	John Rheiner
John Fruendt	Jeffrey Rheiner
Ed Lingg	Carl Gross

## **ACOLYTES FOR JANUARY**

	<u>8:30 a.m.</u>	<u>11:00 a.m.</u>
January 7	Joshua Smetzer	Wyatt Wilson
January 14	David Meissler	Jake Wille
January 21	Corben Perankovich	Daniel Morrison
January 28	Joshua Smetzer	Joe Morrison

## **GREETERS FOR JANUARY**

	<u>8:30 a.m.</u>	<u>11:00 a.m.</u>
January 7	Kim Hendrix Virginia Axtell	Rexann George Deidra Thompson
January 14	Grace Morris Elaine Ward	Mary Marks Judy Ganoza
January 21	Brenda Hoffmann Denise La Bonté	Judy Hanson Clara Cobb
January 28	Jo Ann Koehn Sarah Hanson	Bonnie Koenig Carolyn Friedle

# PARENT-TO-PARENT

GAYLE PULLIAM | STUDENT MINISTRY MENTOR TEAM : PARENT SUPPORT

## Just Keep Rowing

As I sit to write this month's article, I'm in a very strange place for me. I am entering uncharted waters, so-to-speak, and I haven't yet figured out what my heading is. As of January 4, 2018, I am officially an empty-nester. Oh, I've been a semi-empty nester for several years now as my youngest has moved into the college dorms, and then out of the dorms into an apartment, but those were temporary moves. This time it's permanent. There are no more chicks left in the nest, and as much as there is a part of me that is more than a little melancholy over this whole business, there's also a side of me that is somehow excited to see what new challenges and opportunities await.

Over the past two years that I have been contributing to the Mount with these Parent to Parent articles, there have been many of you who have voiced a kindred identification with their content. Your sweet comments have been greatly appreciated, but I have a confession to make. These aren't really my words. They've come out of my fingertips onto the keyboard, yes, but the content...well, that's all the Lord's. You see, when our DCE Laura and I first had the idea to do something like this, I prayed about it earnestly. I wanted the articles to be helpful, meaningful...to offer encouragement wherever possible. I hoped that some of what I had gone through in my life might strike a sympathetic chord with others going through similar circumstances. Honestly, when I sit down to write, it's God who gives the inspiration. It's like He's sitting beside me all the while, looking over my shoulder, nudging me with what to say next.

That hope and desire to connect with people, to relate to others and the issues they're facing has given me new insight into what these empty-nest years are to hold for me....and perhaps for you as well if we're in the same boat. I firmly believe when God tells us in His reassurance that "All things work together for good to them that love

Him," that part of the "working together" is His wonderful ability to make us useful encouragers and hope-givers to those coming after us, especially to those caught in turbulent waters through which we have already passed.

I can't recall the number of times I've had the opportunity to share with someone a difficult situation I have faced, and how the Lord carried me through it. I'm certain that each of you could say the same thing...each of us many times over. When I was younger and struggling myself with all manner of stresses and strains, God always seemed to bring into my life or to my counsel just the right person at just the right time to calm my heart and to encourage my spirit. This is but one way God works all things together for good. Our scars make us relatable, and they give proof that hurts heal and life goes on. The older we get the more witness we have of God's providence and grace and the more testimony we have at our disposal to share.

A number of years ago I came across a book by Dale Hanson Bourke titled, *Embracing Your Second Calling: Find Passion and Purpose for the Rest of Your Life*. It's been some time since I've read it, but the main premise of the book is that midlife or beyond is the time when God can really begin to use us big time for Him. For many of us, the responsibility of raising our families is behind us. Perhaps we have begun to pull back a bit from the frenzied pace of work and outside obligations, or we have even entered retirement. Though this may be a more relaxed time in our lives, it also provides the impetus for redirection. It's a time when we can tell God, "O.k., Lord, there are some gaps in my schedule and my calendar is wide open, so please plug me in somewhere where I can make the biggest impact for You." Then we'd better get ready for action, because I have learned that when I pray a prayer like that, asking God to give me work to do for Him, He's not going to waste any time getting to it!

That "work" will not likely take me across the ocean, but it can certainly take me into my neighborhood where I can invite a few ladies over for coffee and prayer time. His work may not mean preaching on a worldwide stage, but I can definitely share with a distraught friend how God has worked in and through my life in difficult times. I'm not called to feed the masses, but He most

assuredly employs me in taking a tray of cookies over to welcome a new family to the block or bringing a steaming pot of homemade chicken soup to a sick family.

Life doesn't stop when one phase of life ends. We simply move onward and upward entering another. Each life phase provides ample opportunities to do the Lord's bidding, and each is important. The farther along that journey we get, the more we have to offer, not the less. Each gray hair represents wisdom gained through experience. Each wrinkle bears witness to struggles we've overcome with God's help. Time may take from us some of our youthful qualities; we may not be as physically robust as we once were, but one would be hard-pressed to outdo the strength of character and spirit in someone who's spent a lifetime leaning on and learning from the Lord.

As long as there is breath in us, God has a job for us to do. I'm a staunch believer of that. Several months after my mom passed away, I was sitting outside on my parents' deck visiting with my dad when he said to me, "Honey, it's not that I don't love you and my grandchildren. I really do, but your mother was my world, and now that she's gone, I'm ready to go too whenever the Lord calls me home." I was caught off guard by his revelation, though looking back it shouldn't have surprised me much. I knew how my parents felt about each other and I admired their love for one another; but I wasn't ready for my dad to resign from life and, I didn't feel God was ready for him yet either. I told him that I understood how he felt and why...though honestly, I'd have to have been married for 52 plus years myself to have really gotten a grasp on it. I also reminded him that God still had work for my dad to do and that heaven would not come one day sooner than that work, whatever it was, was complete.

Though neither of us knew it that day, it would be four more years before my sweet dad would join my mom in heaven. Dad may not have wanted to stick around, but God knew I needed him. God knew that my dad and I would get some really great quality time together during those years, that his wisdom, humor, and encouragement would be something I'd need to make it through more difficult times to come. I guess you'd have to understand my family's dynamic for what I'm saying to make sense. My mom and I were more that just

mother and daughter. We were also friends, best friends. I spent a great deal of time with her even after getting married and having children. She was my go-to person. Dad was always there, but in the background. It wasn't bad. It wasn't something either of us did consciously. It was just the way it was. When God called my mother home, he also called my dad into the spotlight. My dad and I had more conversations during those four years than I think we had my entire childhood. It was Dad's second calling. It was mine too.

God is good. He knows that we need each other. He knows that we need to be needed too. He has called each of us to a place where we can meet those needs, to be His hands and feet. When we enter a new life phase for whatever reason, we may feel a bit unsettled, unsure of what comes next. We may even be fearful that the best part of the journey is behind us, that there is nothing promising on the horizon. That's just our foolish, sinful nature doing the thinking, for though we may not be able to see beyond that "horizon," God does. He knows what comes next, for He has job after job that needs our specific skill set to accomplish, no matter our age or place in life. We can embrace the uncharted waters with both excitement and abandon, for God has us firmly in His grip. He has a heading all mapped out and waiting for us. He asks only that we stay in the boat and keep rowing.

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