



Mount Calvary Connected

August 3, 2023

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 church, information about upcoming activities at Mt. Calvary, and more!

WEEKLY WORSHIP BULLETINS

Weekly worship bulletins can be found at: www.mt-calvarylutheran.org/bulletins/

Upcoming Meetings and Events

Thurs., August 3rd - Evangelism Committee - 6:30 PM

Tues., August 8th - Property Committee - 6:00 PM

Thurs., August 10th - Social Ministry - 6:30 PM

Tues., August 22nd - Church Council - 6:30 PM

Sat., August 26th - Women's Day of Renewal hosted by The Allegheny Synodical Women's Organization

Sat., September 9th - Touch-a-Truck - 10 AM - 1 PM

Mon., September 18th - WELCA (No August Meeting) - 6:00 PM

It's almost time for Sunday School!

Sunday school sign ups will begin this weekend. Sign-up sheets are in the back of the Narthex . Please fill them out and drop them in the basket beside the sign-up sheets. We will be offering preschool to second grade, third through sixth grade, and junior/senior high school.

Sunday school will follow Sunday morning service from 10 AM to 10:30 AM. The deadline for sign up is Tuesday, August 15th.

If you have any questions, or would like to volunteer as a teacher, please call Mike Kozak at 814-244-6880.

A Day of Renewal

WELCA members & Ladies of Mt Calvary are invited to attend the annual Allegheny Synodical Women's Organization Day of Renewal.

"Refresh, Relax, Recharge"

Saturday, August 26, 2023 --- 9:00am to 1:30

Altoona Grand Hotel—Tropical Courtyard

1 Sheridan Drive, Altoona PA

Scheduled sessions will include four breakout sessions to help you renew your body, mind, and spiritual life. Activities include paint pouring, exercise, craft, and global service.

Keynote speaker, Pastor Rebecca West

Join us for a day of fellowship and fun to re-energize your body, mind and spiritual life.

Registration deadline—August 16, 2023 --- registration fee of \$10.00

Registration forms & information sheets are in the WELCA mailbox in the Church Hallway.

If you have any questions, call Lois Gallus at 814-241-3470 or Kathy Ling at 814-262-7714.

Supplies for First Responders

For July and August, the Social Ministry Committee and the Giving Tree will collect supplies for first responders in the area. Cases of individual Gatorade, energy drinks and bottled water, peanut butter, individually wrapped snack crackers, granola bars, energy bars, coffee, hot chocolate packets, cup-a-soup mixes, etc.

These items will be given to the first responders and Cambria County's Box 11 truck. Box 11 is the vehicle that responds to fires and other disasters to provide rest and refreshments, heating or cooling to first responders on scene.

These supplies will be distributed to first responders who participate in our "Touch-a-Truck" event in September. Monetary donations will also be used to treat participant first responders to hot dogs and snacks at Touch a Truck. This will be our "God's Work, Our Hands" project, too.

Please join us in donating to our local first responders!

Clothing Sale Collection

The Social Ministry Team is currently collecting donations for our annual clothing sale.

Clothes can be dropped off at the church at any time. Clothes left outside in the blue bin will be brought in daily.

Please try to separate your clothes by size and gender, and to label each bag. This makes the sorting and set up process much easier for the volunteers working the sale.

The clothing sale will take place on Saturday, October 7. Save the date!

Worship Help

Readers/Communion Assistants:

August 5th Volunteers needed!

August 6th Lilly Swartz

August 12th Jack Weisbrodt

August 13th Volunteers needed!

August 19th Volunteers needed!

August 20th Volunteers needed!

August 26th Volunteers needed!

August 27th Volunteers needed!

Ushers:

August 5th Dick & Anita Brodt

August 6th Chris Swartz & Tiffany Swartz

August 12th Noelle Berkey

August 13th Volunteers needed!

August 19th Volunteers needed!

August 20th Volunteers needed!

August 26th Volunteers needed!

August 27th Volunteers needed!

Altar Guild:

August The Hockensmith Family

If you would like to volunteer, please contact Terrie Crisi or sign up on the signup sheet in the Narthex.

Worship Leader Schedule for August

August 5th Vicar Claudia Plows

August 6th Vicar Claudia Plows

August 12th Vicar Claudia Plows

August 13th Vicar Claudia Plows

August 19th Rev. Bob Kaltenbaugh

August 20th Rev. Bob Kaltenbaugh

August 26th Pastor Nathan Pile

August 27th To Be Determined

A Prayer for the Call Committee

Heavenly God, we lift before you all members of this congregation. We especially ask your blessing upon those who have been given the responsibility of finding a new pastor. Grant wisdom and right judgment to those who serve on our Call Committee. Guide them to the one who you have chosen to lead us. Grant them the vision to clearly see the leader who is to come among us. Through Jesus Christ, our Savior. Amen.

Baptism

Each time a child is baptized, God smiles from up above knowing he has someone new to shelter and to love. Nolan William Hiltz, child of Benjamin and Chelsea Hiltz, was baptized on Saturday, July 29th, 2023 by Bishop Paula Schmitt.

Welcome to Mount Calvary Nolan!

Featured Article

Getting ultrareal about the church

Ultrarealism, a concept I learned from distance running, begins by seeing things as they really are.

by Martha Tataric in the August 2023 issue of The Christian Century

Like many leaders in the Christian church, I have fallen into the trap of thinking that one new slant, one new program, one new focus will be the thing that saves us. I have fallen into the trap of believing that I can save us.

The desperate desire to save, grow, and transform the church marks a lot of what weighs on the minds and hearts of parish leaders and what creates the most anxiety in our work. In an institutional church that has been in population decline longer than I have been alive, the programs and trends that are supposed to save us are constantly on offer. Some of these offerings blatantly promise numerical growth; others make vaguer promises but speak of transformation and vitality for the institutional church.

Our professional development opportunities tend to be focused either on corralling us into leading these new ways of being the church or on offering us models of self-care to recover from the stress of always trying to get our communities to become something different from what they currently are. In a breakout session in one such professional development day for clergy, a colleague expressed his fatigue at what was being shared by our charismatic presenter.

“I’m tired,” he shared. “I’m tired of being given yet another hypothetical vision of what the church should be.”

When the pandemic hit, it became unavoidably clear to me that I was close to burnout. I can name a number of specific circumstances that were tipping me over the edge at that time, but in truth, the reasons I was struggling had little to do with any of them. The weariness my colleague expressed was mine, too. I had gotten into the habit of carrying around the heavy weight of other people’s expectations like it was compulsory; I kept taking on more and feeling less like any of it was working. I was stuck in a place I didn’t want to be, following a carrot that always seemed out of reach. One of my primary feelings when COVID shut down our world was relief from the relentless pace I had been keeping.

Along with this unsettling realization was also a collective question, a question not unrelated to my burnout. When we couldn’t gather, we had to ask why gathering might matter. When all the world was in disarray and the profound inequality, injustice, and suffering of our world laid bare, mere self-preservation wasn’t a good enough answer. It is so easy in our Christian leadership to become consumed with questions of assuring the church’s survival, but the critical question is, Why bother with any of this at all?

There is a concept, which I learned through long-distance running, called ultrarealism. Runners can easily undo their own efforts by worrying about what is coming next or wishing that things were different. Ultrarealism instead sees, accepts, and embraces what actually is. I might get freaked-out about my uneven breathing. I might feel despair about the spitting rain and how slowly the first mile seems to have gone when I still have 17 to go. But while these things about breathing and rain and mileage might be true, I can choose to note that, right here in this present moment, my leg muscles feel strong, the rain is refreshing, and I have the great privilege of being able to run. I can feel the discomfort but also recognize that not only am I not dying, not only am I safe and okay, but I am running and it feels good.

The concept of the ultrareal could have powerful implications for the life of the church. As an institution constantly reminded of its own decline, it is easy to get locked into endless lamenting for the societal change that has so impacted our congregations, the nonstop pursuit of the programmatic solution that is going to reverse those trajectories, and a soul-destroying envy toward the versions of Christianity that seem to be so much better at drawing the crowds. It's easy, as my colleague expressed, to feel as if we are trapped in the hypothetical—never closer to attaining the picture of institutional health that has been set for us by nostalgia or programmatic promise. It's not just that these dynamics leave those of us in leadership wondering if there's an exit hatch; it's also that there is very little that is compelling or life-giving about a church that is so obviously desperate and dissatisfied.

Instead, the ultrareal church begins by seeing who we really are. The church is the real, complicated, messy people who have found themselves gathered together and who have been met by the surprising power of God's love. This reality has implications for me as a leader in the church. My job description is amazingly simple: my job is to lift up. Day in and day out, I am the one who stands at our church's altar, physically and literally lifting up the bread and wine to be the stuff through which God's blessing will be communicated. It's representative of my whole job, which is to lift up the real stories of struggle, mess, heartbreak, and beauty—to help us better see the truth of how God is meeting us right here and right now.

That realization allows me some acceptance. I have to accept that there is never enough of me to go around, that there is always unfinished work at the end of the day, and that when people are hurting, my shortcomings as a pastor might become an easy target for expressing their pain and frustration. I also accept that it is a holy thing indeed to be able to care for and pray with people in the most critical moments of their lives. By God's grace, as I continue to invest my heart and soul in this work, I can participate in something beautiful.

I accept too that although the institution of the church can be toxic and hurtful in ways that must be called into question and even protested, right now I understand that the best place from which I can fight for change is within the bounds of the thing that needs changing. I accept that as I fight for change, sometimes what might most need changing is me.

I can serve and fail and fight and admit inadequacy; I can marvel at what God does with my inadequacy. What I don't have to do is save anything. I haven't been commissioned by Jesus to go and reverse trends of institutional decline. Neither have you. What we are invited to do is to turn around—repent—and open our eyes to the kingdom that, with or without us, is already here. We don't have to fearfully manage the powerful reign of God's healing and transforming love. We don't need to make it something else or wish it were different. We do need to get better at putting our energy, attention, time, and love toward what is already happening.

In seeing and accepting, I find something to embrace rather than run from. The thing I end up embracing is salvation—but it's not up to me to make it happen, and it's not about resuscitating a dying institution, either. Why bother with any of this? Why should the church, rocked to its core by COVID, keep trying to gather?

We bother and we gather because the church bears witness to the truth of who we really are. Whether or not an individual participates in a faith community, the inescapable truth for every creature on this planet is that we are connected. I might wish I could pick and choose which parts of creation and which of God's creatures share in that connection, but God is a pretty good door crasher when it comes to the gates of my heart. As COVID made clear, we are radically infected by one another's oxygen and water vapor and germs and skin molecules, and at the same time our souls actually can't know and love God without one another. The great crises of our modern-day living are all rooted in having lost sight of that truth. The gathered church bears witness—for us and for the world—to the inescapable truth of how our lives are finally and forever bound together.

In the falling apart of a global pandemic, I had an opportunity to get ultrareal about myself and about the church. It turns out that these two living, breathing realities are connected. I didn't experience any magical answers to how I, or we, could assure the future of the mainline church. But I did experience freedom. It is freeing to be clear about who I am and who we are. It is freeing to shift away from the dead-end street of trying to measure up to the messianic expectations declining institutions place on their leaders and toward the job I am actually called to do.

The church is littered with all of the ways that we get it wrong. It is also showered with the inconvenient blessing of the God who keeps showing up, especially in the people and places I might rather edit out of my field of vision. It is not hypothetical. With or without us, it is happening. That's what I want to get better at seeing; that's what I want to love and serve. I want to lift up those stories of God meeting us in the mess and binding, the heartbreak and confusion and truth of just how infected with one another we really are. I want to love and serve an offering that has a chance of speaking to a whole world of hungry, broken, messed-up people—who are also already brimming with stories of God's touch and looking for language and permission to speak of holy things.

*Martha Tatarnic is rector of St. George's Anglican Church in St. Catharines, Ontario, and author of *The Living Diet: A Christian Journey to Joyful Eating*.*

August 5th - 11th, 2023

Anniversaries

August 8 - Frank & Nancy Robison

August 11 - Julian & Felicia Beglin

Birthdays

August 6 - Jared McQuaide

August 8 - Thomas Hockensmith

August 9 - John Daily Jr., Corey Katrancha, & Dee Locher

August 11 - Kristiana Given & Caleb Hockensmith

Remember those that prayer has been requested for:

Sandy; Louise; Brooke & Bill; Chuck; Dawn; Cherie; Lorrie & Bill; Jamie Bloom; Wilma Hiltz; Johnny Nerone; Cheryl & Roger; James; Denny & Ellen; Sue; El Warshel; Beth Oldham; Stacy & Josh; Janet; Landon; Harold; Mary; Elaine, Patty and Betty Shaffer; Jim Haberkorn; Patty Creany; Rick Wagner; Brianna; Jackie; Mike; Lois; David Mathis & Austin & Family; The Bell Family; Suzzane Miller; Cindy; Danny & Donna Crowson; Bert; for the Call Committee as they seek our future pastor; Jerry Pozun; Pastor Dave Louder and his wife, Corlee; Milo; Jill Lisson; Krista Miller; The Cullens Family; The Wilson Family; Cecilia Baum; The Dickerson-Bair Family; Richelle; The Rohrabough Family; Tom & Gretchen; Makenzie Miller; Alex; Jan Layton; the Dalton Blough Family; Jan.

Condensed Worship July 29th & 30th, 2023 The kingdom of heaven is like yeast

Prayer of the Day

P: Beloved and sovereign God, through the death and resurrection of your Son you bring us into your kingdom of justice and mercy. By your Spirit, give us your wisdom, that we may treasure the life that comes from Jesus Christ, our Savior and Lord.

A: Amen.

First Reading: 1 Kings 3:5-12

At Gibeon the LORD appeared to Solomon in a dream by night; and God said, "Ask what I should give you." And Solomon said, "You have shown great and steadfast love to your servant my father David, because he walked before you in faithfulness, in righteousness, and in uprightness of heart toward you; and you have kept for him this great and steadfast love, and have given him a son to sit on his throne today. And now, O LORD my God, you have made your servant king in place of my father David, although I am only a little child; I do not know how to go out or come in. And your servant is in the midst of the people whom you have chosen, a great people, so numerous they cannot be numbered or counted. Give your servant therefore an understanding mind to govern your people, able to discern between good and evil; for who can govern this your great people?" It pleased the Lord that Solomon had asked this. God said to him, "Because you have asked this, and have not asked for yourself long life or riches, or for the life of your enemies, but have asked for yourself understanding to discern what is right, I now do according to your word. Indeed I give you a wise and discerning mind; no one like you has been before you and no one like you shall arise after you." The word of the Lord, **A: Thanks be to God.**

Psalmody: Psalm 119:129-136

L: Your decrees are wonderful; therefore I obey them with all my heart.

A: When your word is opened it gives light; it gives understanding to the simple.

L: I open my mouth and pant because I long for your commandments.

A: Turn to me and be gracious to me, as you always do to those who love your name.

L: Order my footsteps in your word; let no iniquity have dominion over me.

A: Rescue me from those who oppress me, and I will keep your commandments.

L: Let your face shine upon your servant and teach me your statutes.

A: My eyes shed streams of tears, because people do not keep your teaching.

Second Reading: Romans 8:26-39

The Spirit helps us in our weakness; for we do not know how to pray as we ought, but that very Spirit intercedes with sighs too deep for words. And God, who searches the heart, knows what is the mind of the Spirit, because the Spirit intercedes for the saints according to the will of God. We know that all things work together for good for those who love God, who are called according to his purpose. For those whom he foreknew he also predestined to be conformed to the image of his Son, in order that he might be the firstborn within a large family. And those whom he predestined he also called; and those whom he called he also justified; and those whom he justified he also glorified. What then are we to say about these things? If God is for us, who is against us? He who did not withhold his own Son, but gave him up for all of us, will he not with him also give us everything else? Who will bring any charge against God's elect? It is God who justifies. Who is to condemn? It is Christ Jesus, who died, yes, who was raised, who is at the right hand of God, who indeed intercedes for us. Who will separate us from the love of Christ? Will hardship, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword? As it is written, "For your sake we are being killed all day long; we are accounted as sheep to be slaughtered." No, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him who loved us. For I am convinced that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor rulers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor powers, nor height, nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord. The word of the Lord, **A: Thanks be to God.**

Gospel: Matthew 13:31-33, 44-52

P: The holy gospel according to Matthew. **A: Glory to you, O Lord.**

[Jesus] put before [the crowds] another parable: "The kingdom of heaven is like a mustard seed that someone took and sowed in his field; it is the smallest of all the seeds, but when it has grown it is the greatest of shrubs and becomes a tree, so that the birds of the air come and make nests in its branches." He told them another parable: "The kingdom of heaven is like yeast that a woman took and mixed in with three measures of flour until all of it was leavened." "The kingdom of heaven is like treasure hidden in a field, which someone found and hid; then in his joy he goes and sells all that he has and buys that field. "Again, the kingdom of heaven is like a merchant in search of fine pearls; on finding one pearl of great value, he went and sold all that he had and bought it. "Again, the kingdom of heaven is like a net that was thrown into the sea and caught fish of every kind; when it was full, they drew it ashore, sat down, and put the good into baskets but threw out the bad. So it will be at the end of the age. The angels will come out and separate the evil from the righteous and throw them into the furnace of fire, where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth. "Have you understood all this?" They answered, "Yes." And he said to them, "Therefore every scribe who has been trained for the kingdom of heaven is like the master of a household who brings out of his treasure what is new and what is old."

The gospel of the Lord, **A: Praise to you, O Christ!**

Prayers Of Intercession

L: Confident that God receives our joys and concerns, let us offer our prayers for the church, those in need, and all of creation.

L: Almighty God, we pray for the church and all servants of the gospel. Equip rostered and lay ministers to proclaim that nothing can separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus. Form confirmands and catechumens into disciples. Hear us, O God.

A: Your mercy is great.

L: Gracious God, we pray for the well-being of creation. Safeguard the environment, clean polluted rivers and lakes, preserve the mighty tree and the tiny mustard seed, and send advocates for sustainable practices. Hear us, O God.

A: Your mercy is great.

L: Compassionate God, we pray for the nations. Instill in all who govern the ability to discern between good and evil, free those who are oppressed, and protect those facing danger. Promote peace across the world and in our towns and neighborhoods. Hear us, O God.

A: Your mercy is great.

L: Merciful God, we pray for all in any need. Protect those fleeing from war, shelter any who are in poverty, clothe the naked, soothe all who grieve, and heal the sick. Hear us, O God.

A: Your mercy is great.

L: Holy God, we pray for this congregation, both those gathered today and those absent from our assembly. Grant safety to travelers and refreshment and safety for children attending summer camps or community programs. Give direction to any experiencing life transitions. Hear us, O God.

A: Your mercy is great.

L: Almighty God, giver of every good gift; look upon this congregation with grace. Guide the minds of our Call Committee members as they discern which of your servants will be our next pastor. Please grant that we might receive a faithful shepherd who will care for us and continue to equip us for ministry in this place. Hear us, O God.

A: Your mercy is great.

L: Eternal God, we give thanks for your saints who now rest from their labors. Inspire us by their witness to treasure the gospel, and continually nourish us with your grace. Hear us, O God.

A: Your mercy is great.

L: Into your hands, O God, we commend all for whom we pray, in the name of the one who reconciled all creation to himself, Jesus Christ our Savior.

A: Amen.

Blessing

P: The God who calls across the cosmos and speaks in the smallest seed † bless, keep, and sustain you now and to the end of the age.

A: Amen.