

# THE HILLTOPPER

December 2024

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## **A Message from Your Interim Pastor**

Dear New Friends of Mine:

At the congregation I served in North Huntington, a 9-year-old misspoke the truth when she recited John 3:16 during the closing program of VBS. Trying so very hard to impress her parents, she spoke directly into the microphone and recited as clearly as she could:

For God so loved the world  
that he gave his only begotten Son,  
so that everyone who believes in him  
may not perish but may have internal life.

At first, there was some chuckling from the adults. And then a collective “ahhh” was heard affirming the truth she spoke. “may not perish but may have internal life.” How right she was. That’s what we all want. That precious night is coming soon when we will know once again where “internal” JOY is to be found.

In the New Testament Greek, there are three-word groups translated as JOY.

- + The first-word group speaks of the festive internal joy that results in singing, dancing, clapping of hands, and the lifting up of praise to God in worship.
- + The second-word group identifies joy as the outward expression of an inner feeling of merriment. This is the joy of eating and drinking and enjoying the festive company and revelry of good friends. Jesus says this is an image of the joy of the eternal banquet of heaven.
- + But it is the third-word group that is the more commonly used in the New Testament. One hundred- and forty times Paul writes that it is this inner joy that is the hallmark of our life in Christ.

Paul explains that this JOY is not dependent on health or wealth, but entirely on God.

As Advent moves along, we will once again hear Paul’s familiar refrain: “Rejoice in the Lord always; again, I will say Rejoice.” (Philippians 4:4) On the 3<sup>rd</sup> Sunday in Advent, when a pinkish candle is lit, instead of a blue one, we will sing “Rejoice, Rejoice Believers!”

When Paul writes of REJOICING, he is describing a joy that was more than a mood or even an emotion. For Paul, JOY is a way of looking at the world - it is a perception of the presence of God that generates hope and endurance in affliction and temptation, because joy enables us to see beyond a particular event, whether good or bad, to see the sovereign Lord who stands above all and, ultimately, has control over all.

So, Paul does not say to rejoice in all circumstances. Paul says, “Rejoice in the Lord.”

And since God never changes, Paul can say, “Rejoice in the Lord always.” JOY that lasts is not externally dependent. It is not dependent on the absence of pain or sorrow. Joy that lasts is rooted and grounded in one thing – in the God who is eternal.

In Christ’s Peace,  
PW

**Pastor Jim West’s church office hours are:  
Wednesday’s & Thursday’s 9:00am – 12:00pm  
Pastor’s email address is [pastor@mt-calvarylutheran.org](mailto:pastor@mt-calvarylutheran.org)**



Dec 3 Brittany Morgenstern  
 Dec 3 Tim Moyer  
 Dec 5 Betty Weaver  
 Dec 7 Rebecca Daly  
 Dec 14 Rian Barker  
 Dec 14 Leona Cannarella

Dec 18 Karen Bantly  
 Dec 19 Eric Wingard  
 Dec 22 Jessica Harshberger  
 Dec 22 Jamie McMullen  
 Dec 26 Dana Begley  
 Dec 26 Christine Oleksa  
 Dec 29 Leonard Strihan

*Happy Anniversary*

December 21 Thomas & Kathleen Rohrbaugh



*We offer our prayers and sympathy to the families of Gerald Barrick, Kathleen Harriger and Kathy Ponchione on their recent passing.*

**CALENDAR OF EVENTS**

December 4	6:00	The Chosen Bible Study
December 10	6:00	Property Meeting
December 11	6:00	The Chosen Bible Study
December 15	12:00	Lunch with Santa
December 17	6:30	Church Council Meeting
December 18	6:00	The Chosen Bible Study
December 19	7:00	Johnstown Community Chorus Concert "A Festival of Nine Lessons and Carols"
December 24	4:00	Family Christmas Eve Service
	7:00	Christmas Eve Service

Thank you Kathy Ling and Karen Guinta for serving on Altar Guild in December.

## BLANKET SUNDAY/LWR COLLECTION PROJECT FINAL REPORT

Late summer we let you know that WGMC (Women's Group of Mt. Calvary) had been asked by the Allegheny Synod to take charge of the Blanket Sunday/Lutheran World Relief Collection Project. This turned out to be a larger undertaking than we had originally realized. It involved coordinating efforts from the congregations of the 6 Synod conferences (of which our Johnstown Conference is one); working with 2 trucking companies (McQuaide's and WARD); and setting a final date and time for all the donations to be delivered to one place. Finally, those donations of hundreds of boxes were loaded onto a tractor trailer and eventually trucked to the LWR Distribution Center in New Windsor, MD. We worked diligently and made it happen.

On November 4, five ladies from Mt. Calvary (Linda Barnhart, Karen Giunta, Kathy Ling, Gloria Reed, and Shirley Glova) drove to Newry Lutheran Church (Blair/Huntington Conference) to oversee the collection. God blessed us with excellent weather, safe travels, a congenial truck driver who arrived on time, AND (very importantly) Shirley's son, Mark, who arrived with a forklift and pallets and shrink wrap! The collection was to run from 10am to noon, but everything was loaded into the truck trailer and ready to go by 11:15! The delivery people from the various congregations greeted each other and then helped load pallets. It was an amazing cooperative effort! AND our hostess at Newry Lutheran had coffee and cookies for us!

So just how many items were loaded? In addition to the \$455 given to the Synod to purchase 91 blankets, the following items were donated by Allegheny Synod:

Blankets - 178

Baby Care Kits - 2

Quilts - 872

Fabric Kits - 25

Personal Care Kits - 1039

School Kits - 720

It was so heartwarming to know that people here in the US and around the world who face unimaginable hardships would have some help coming from Lutherans in the Allegheny Synod! Thank you for your help. It took a Synod!

*Submitted by... Gloria Reed*

*If you would like to submit an article to be published in our Hilltopper, please submit all requests to [office@mt-calvarylutheran.org](mailto:office@mt-calvarylutheran.org) no later than the 15<sup>th</sup> of each month.*

# Church News & Updates

## 'Tis the Season!

It's hard to believe but Advent is just around the corner! This year the Worship & Music Committee is trying something a little different when it comes to decorating our church for the holidays. Since Advent is a time of preparation and waiting, we are going to decorate progressively! That means that you'll see decorations slowly added over the course of Advent instead of all at once. We still need your help though! We are planning a **Decorate 'n' Feed** on **Sunday, December 8<sup>th</sup> at 5 PM!**

This is when we will be adding Chrismons and other ornaments to our trees in the Sanctuary and Narthex. Once the trees are decorated, we'll have soup and fellowship (and maybe even some carol-singing for those who are interested!). Keep an eye out for more information in Mt. Calvary Connected about signing up to help!



- Prayer Chain - If you have any names, please call Mary Ann Mapes at 814-266-2185 or the office. It is not necessary to give any details unless requested by the individual.
- Mt. Calvary Choir - We are looking to get a choir going for the winter 2024 season. Open to all ages. One of our goals is to sing on Christmas Eve. We need singers and bell ringers! Contact the church office or Dan Gresh for more details.
- Some individuals have stepped up and offered to continue the Flea Market for next year. During your spring cleaning don't forget to save your "goodies." More information to follow.
- The spaghetti dinner and bake sale made \$1,318.50!! Thank you to the Property Committee and everyone else who played a part in this wonderful fund raiser.
- Don't forget to pick up a new directory! They are located in the narthex on the information table.
- Our current flower supplier Schrader's Florist has raised the altar flower cost from \$40.00 to \$44.00 starting Jan 1, 2025. They are still providing us the lowest price we can find.
- A reminder of the "Wreaths Across America!" If you are interested in purchasing wreaths, they are \$17.00 each and the check is payable to "Wreaths Across America" and mailed to the Richland Cemetery, 1257 Scalp Avenue, Johnstown, PA 15904. Once again, if you purchase 2 wreaths totaling \$34.00 there will be 3 wreaths delivered. Thank you for contributing to this amazing cause. They currently have over 900 and well on their way to reach their goal of 1,000.
- The poinsettia prices this year will be \$12.00 for a 6" pot. Orders will need to be in the church office by **December 2**. There is an order blank attached below.
- Please be mindful we are ALWAYS in need of **READERS, USHERS** and **ALTAR GUILD** helpers/members. The sign-up sheets are in the narthex for readers and ushers. If you are able to help volunteer with Altar Guild, you can contact Jan Layton, Gloria Reed, Jamie McMullen or you can always simply call the church office.
- Come and join us for a visit with Santa at our annual **Lunch with Santa** event on **December 15!** Open to all children 12 and under. Everyone is welcome to attend. Please call the church office to register before December 9. The cost of this event is free.

From our Council President,

Starting this January, the **Altar Guild** will be under the new direction of the Worship and Music Committee. I now have other responsibilities within our church community and my commitment to travelling between Virginia and Johnstown to take care of family is sometimes at a moment's notice. I appreciate the committee taking on this additional task and bringing new ideas and suggestions to the Altar Guild. I can't thank EVERYONE enough for all you have done to help over the years... *Cindy*



*What is Altar Guild?* Altar Guild is a group of individuals who prepare the altar for worship each week.

*How is that done?* Members of the Altar Guild place the linens and sacraments (host/bread and wine) on the altar.

*What other responsibilities go with this committee?* The Altar Guild is responsible for cleaning up the altar and the altar area after each service. They will often walk through the sanctuary and collect any remaining bulletins, and when needed, they will launder altar linens.

## ALTAR GUILD

*Do I have to do this every week?* Typically, several people are put on teams. Teams are assigned for a month or two depending on your availability and the number of volunteers. Members of each monthly team will be responsible for all the weekends in that month. Sounds like a lot, but it only takes 10-15 minutes of your time each weekend you are assigned. It's a very special way to help your church family.

*What if I am unavailable for a particular weekend in my month?* That is the beauty of having several people on the team. Team members work together so the burden does not fall on one individual! Teams will work together to ensure that the work gets done without putting too much of a burden on any one individual. Many hands make light the work!

If this is a ministry you would be willing to support or you have some more questions, please reach out to any member of the Worship & Music Committee (Jan Layton, Ray Leverknight, Jamie McMullen, Gloria Reed, & Deb Zilch) or call the church office.



**POINTSETTIA      WORLD HUNGER**  
**ORDER FORM DUE    \*\*DECEMBER 2\*\***

**POINTSETTIAS**

IN HONOR OF \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

HOW MANY \_\_\_\_\_

IN MEMORY OF \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

HOW MANY \_\_\_\_\_

**WORLD HUNGER**

IN HONOR OF \_\_\_\_\_

IN MEMORY OF \_\_\_\_\_

TOTAL AMOUNT OF 6" POINTSETTIA \_\_\_\_\_ X \$12.00 = \$ \_\_\_\_\_

TOTAL AMOUNT DONATION FOR WORLD HUNGER = \$ \_\_\_\_\_



Wishing your family a blessed Christmas as we celebrate the birth of our Lord.

May our church community be filled with the joy and peace of Christ this Christmas. To all our church leaders and volunteers, thank you for your faithful service. May God bless everyone this Christmas season.

...Mount Calvary Lutheran Church.

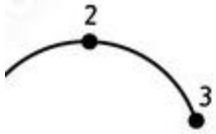
*Luke 2:8*

*And there were in the same country shepherds abiding in the field, keeping watch over their flock by night. 2:9 And, lo, the angel of the Lord came upon them, and the glory of the Lord shone round about them: May you experience the presence of God, and may you have the gift of peace this Christmas and many blessings throughout this new year.*

### **Six little stories with lots of meanings!**

1. Once all villagers decided to pray for rain. On the day of prayer, all the people gathered, but only one boy came with an umbrella. That is **faith**.
2. When you throw babies in the air, they laugh because they know you will catch them. That is **trust**.
3. Every night we go to bed without any assurance of being alive the next morning, but still we set alarms to wake up. That is **hope**.
4. We plan big things for tomorrow in spite of zero knowledge of the future that is **confidence**.
5. We see the world suffering, but still, we get married and have children. That is **love**.
6. On an old man's shirt was written a sentence "I am not 80 years old; I am sweet 16 with 65 years of experience." That is **attitude**.

**Have a happy day and live your life like these six stories. Remember – good friends are the rare jewels of life, difficult to find and impossible to replace!!**



# Connect the Dots



Mount Calvary Lutheran Church  
1000 Scalp Avenue  
Johnstown, PA 15904-3035

