



The Hilltopper



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Look for Mt. Calvary Lutheran Church of Johnstown, PA.

February 2025 - Volume 82 – Issue 2

Mt. Calvary Lutheran Church
1000 Scalp Ave., Johnstown, PA 15904
Phone – (814) 266-4859 Office Hours: Mon thru Fri 8:30 AM to 4 PM
E-Mail - mtcalvary@mt-calvarylutheran.org
Web Site - www.mt-calvarylutheran.org

Worship Times
Saturdays 5:30pm
Sundays 8:45am
Sunday School – 8:15am
Adult class after Sunday worship

Hilltopper

Assembly Team

Linda Barnhart
Pam Bittner
Pat Bittner
Joan Bunnell
Mary Ann Mapes
Ray Leverknight

Editors/Typists

Todd Moss
Jamie McMullen
Jan Layton

Church Staff...

Daniel Gresh, Director of Music/Organist
Todd Moss, Church Administrator & Sexton



Congregational Council...

Cindy Solarczyk, President	Ruth Pawlowski
Kevin Oleksa, Vice-President	Jeff Penrod
Cara Lonsinger, Secretary	Dave Raho
Missy Brodt	Bobbi Ream
Todd Moss	Judy Stinebiser
	Jack Weisbrodt

"Give, and it will be given to you. Good measure, pressed down, shaken together, running over, will be put into your lap. For with the measure you use it will be measured back to you".

Luke 6:38

Online giving is now available.

Your support of Mount Calvary is always appreciated, and you may now give on-line if you desire. Here is how it works:

- >Go to www.mt-calvarylutheran.org.
- >On the bottom right of the home page click the "donate" button.
- >You will be taken to a secure PayPal page. (You do not need a PayPal account.)
- >Enter the amount of your donation and your credit or debit card information.



Your donations will be listed on your annual giving statement. All undesignated contributions will go into the General Fund. You can, however, make a contribution to a special cause like the Stepping Forward in Faith Appeal by entering the information in the "purpose" box on the webpage. If you desire, you can also make your offering an automatic monthly contribution.



ONE CHURCH. ONE CONGREGATION. ONE DECISION.

The Evangelical Lutheran Church of America (ELCA), our Lutheran denominations governing body, is preparing for the Churchwide Assembly meeting which is held every 3 years. At the 2022 Assembly there was a vote to study church structure and a Commission For A Renewed Lutheran Church was established. This commission will report at the upcoming 2025 meeting. The ELCA will be voting on items at this 2025 Churchwide Assembly that will impact Lutheran churches at the local level. All ELCA Lutheran churches have begun (if they are aware of the implications) to research and hold congregational meetings/informational sessions to make educated informed decisions that are for the good of their congregation.

This is NOT unique to Mt. Calvary.

It is time for us as a congregation to come together under God's guidance, to make the decision which is best to protect this church, it's history and our values and beliefs.

There will be upcoming church informational sessions for you to be able to attend. The dates for these *initial* meetings are the following:

January 31 @ 3:00pm

February 1 @ 6:30pm

February 2 @ 9:30am

These meetings are designed to provide you with researched information from reputable sources, an opportunity to do your own research, and an opportunity to come together as a congregation to ask questions in a respectful manner and pray together for our congregational future. There will be more dates to follow.

The following names below are members of our research committee that have already spent countless hours researching, asking questions and seeking input to provide you with information and can assist you in navigating all the literature/sources that are available in order to become knowledgeable prior to any future congregational meetings.

Please do not hesitate to reach out to any of the following members with questions or concerns:

Susan Penrod, Missy Brodt, Mike Kozak, Deb Rychak, Mark Rychak, Dave Raho, and Chris Oleksa.



Mt. Calvary will be holding its first annual town hall meeting with an open forum discussion on **Tuesday February 4, 2025**, in Sander Hall starting at 6:00pm. There will be several members from our various church committees on hand that will be there to answer any questions or concerns you may have related to anything pertaining to Mt. Calvary Lutheran.

This is your opportunity to learn and to understand how your church and its committees operate as well as how you can participate and share your voice and be heard.

Everyone is encouraged to attend.



Our annual congregational meeting has been rescheduled.
The new date is **Sunday February 9, 2025**, starting at 10:00am. See you there.

Mt. Calvary 2024 church statistics

Current active members: 259

Current active households: 151

Deaths in 2024: 14

Baptisms in 2024: 6

Confirmations in 2024: 0

Church transfers out in 2024: 10

Church transfers in in 2024: 9

Council Messages

Funeral dinner update:

For a long time, we have had a wonderful, hard-working group of ladies volunteer their time to cook and serve funeral dinners when needed at Mt. Calvary. In recent years, some of these dinners consisted of approximately 100 people or more at one seating. These ladies have developed an excellent system and have always worked well together!

However, as the years have passed, age and health related issues have finally caught up with some members of the group. After much thought, consideration and discussion regarding alternatives, this group of amazing ladies has decided to discontinue offering funeral dinners. This decision was not arrived at easily. This group of ladies have taken pride in representing Mt. Calvary by putting on these dinners for families at a time when many forms of comfort are greatly appreciated.

That doesn't mean that the facilities at Mt. Calvary will no longer be available for funeral dinners or other events going forward. You are welcome to use Sander Hall or the gym for your dinner. However, going forward, you will just be required to enlist the services of an outside caterer to provide your choice of meals for your dinner or event.

If there is anyone that would like to volunteer to take up this task of continuing to provide these dinners for funerals, please contact any council member or Todd in the church office.

Thank you again ladies for all you have done throughout the years! Your efforts and dedication to Mt. Calvary throughout these past years will never be forgotten. And may Our Lord continue to bless you!!!!

Happy February from the Call Committee:

For those of you that attended the brief congregational meeting on Sunday January 26th, allow this month's note to follow up on some of the questions and concerns that were raised during our pre-meeting discussions. For those of you who were unable to attend, this note will serve as an update to the status of the call committee and hopefully answer any questions you may have.

First and foremost, let me assure you that the Call Committee still exists and is eagerly waiting for potential candidates to be identified. Early in the process, the bishop informed the council and call committee that locating a new pastor could take two years or more. We were advised that over 30 vacancies existed within the Synod and nearly 600 vacancies existed nationwide. Let us assure you that the Call Committee's desire is to identify a Lutheran Minister as our next leader.

One of the questions which arose on Sunday was the possibility of sharing a pastor with another congregation. While this may be a possibility, that decision falls to the Church Council not the Call Committee.

Another question surrounded who was on the Call Committee and why they were not presented to the congregation. The answer is that during the council meeting where the Call Committee was appointed, a vote was held and a majority elected to remain anonymous until such time as a potential candidate was identified. Considering how quickly words travel within the congregation, it is surprising that two years later the members of the committee are still unknown to most. In order to be as transparent as possible, I have reached out to the other members of the committee and ask that I be allowed to share their identities with the congregation.

You may recall from earlier communications that our church council retained the services of The Shepherds Staff, a recruiting firm specializing in assisting congregations desiring to locate new pastors. Six months of aggressive recruitment and interviewing by The Shepherds Staff only resulted in a single qualified candidate who ultimately elected to remain at the church he was serving at the time. With the limited results and a less than optimistic outlook, church council and The Shepherds Staff reached an agreement to suspend the search while council considers the best options for the church moving into the future.

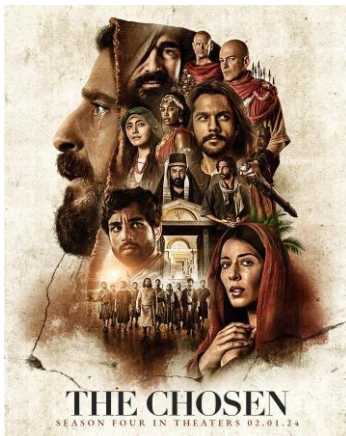
In June of this year, the Ministry Site Profile (MSP) was updated to reflect changes in the leadership at Mt Calvary and on the call committee. The MSP is a document that is shared across all synods within the ELCA allowing access to pastors seeking a new call to review all current openings. The MSP includes information related to the local community, the church, compensation and benefits packages, and the pastor's qualifications requirements.

As we move into 2025 with a new Bishop and new direction from the congregation, we are praying for a timely and successful conclusion to our search. Please do not hesitate to reach out to me with any questions or concerns. I look forward to seeing you at the rescheduled congregational meeting on February 9th.

Respectfully,

Mike Zerby, Call Committee Chair

mleezerby@gmail.com



The Chosen Bible Study

Join us each Wednesday at 6:00 PM in the New Lounge for The Chosen Bible Study! Each week we watch an episode of the worldwide phenomenon and discuss it.



HAPPY BIRTHDAY

Feb 1 Mark McQuaide
 Feb 2 Gary Gusmenotti
 Feb 2 Kathleen Rohrabaugh
 Feb 5 Louis Horn
 Feb 7 Michael Zerby
 Feb 10 William Nihoff
 Feb 12 Susan Osborn
 Feb 17 Nathaniel Mayket

Feb 17 Luke Raho
 Feb 19 Jerry Heinze
 Feb 19 John Plunkard
 Feb 20 Corey Nider
 Feb 22 Deborah Finnegan
 Feb 23 Reagan Daly
 Feb 24 William Eschrich
 Feb 28 Dianne Thoburn

Happy Anniversary

Feb 21 Paul and Anita Brodt (63)

Congratulations!

Please share your weddings, births, graduations, and other celebrations with our congregation. We would love to share them in the Hilltopper!
 Please send good news to the church office.

With sympathy

We extend our sympathy to the family and friends of *Thomas J. Walker* who recently passed.



Parish Prayers – please remember these family, friends, and loved ones for whom prayer was requested:

Jill Lisson, Wilma Hiltz, Larry Hockensmith, Pierce family, Claudia Plows, Gavin Daily, Tina Honkas, Landon, Autumn, Maddy, Church Council, Call Committee, Mel, Glenn, Shawn, Kim, Mark, Floy, Mark Bertelson, Liz, Quinn, Buddie Grove, Don Grassmyer, Jared McQuaide, Linda, Susan, Alice, Lois, Dawn Marie, Denny, Rick, Mary Jane, Larry Hartman, Gary, Jaci Stahl-Hauger, California fire victims



Over the last few days, multiple wildfires have broken out across Los Angeles County in California, with over 100,000 people under evacuation orders. Sparked by dry conditions, strong winds and a limited water supply, these fires have destroyed homes and businesses and have led to injuries and loss of life.

This disaster is just one of many — including hurricanes, war and famine — to which Lutheran Disaster Response is still responding. [Your gifts to Lutheran Disaster Response equip us to respond quickly and generously, wherever and whenever disaster may strike.](#)

Firefighting efforts continue in Southern California, and we won't know the full impact until the fires are extinguished. Even as these fires still burn, Lutheran Disaster Response is here to support the families and communities that will be rebuilding their lives.

As Presiding Bishop Elizabeth Eaton said in her [statement about the wildfires](#), "The prophet Isaiah writes that even when fires rage, the final word is faith, not fear. God redeems us and calls us by name to be agents of healing and hope, even amid staggering loss. In faith, we respond through prayer, accompaniment and action."

Lutheran Disaster Response is coordinating with the Southwest California Synod and Pacifica Synod to assess the needs of people impacted by the wildfires. We will work with them to address immediate needs amid the destruction and assist with recovery efforts for months and years to come.

Unfortunately, disasters such as these are increasing across the globe and in your neighborhoods. [By giving to Lutheran Disaster Response, you allow us to mobilize quickly for wildfires and other disasters, giving the gift of relief today and resilience tomorrow. Will you give today?](#)

More information

- Read Bishop Eaton's statement about the LA wildfires on the ELCA website.
- Learn more about wildfire response at [ELCA.org/wildfires](https://www.elca.org/wildfires).
- Find current updates from the Lutheran Disaster Response team at [facebook.com/ELCALDR](https://www.facebook.com/ELCALDR).

FINAL UPDATE BLANKET SUNDAY 2024

When we last reported on Blanket Sunday donations, many congregations had not yet submitted their final monetary amount given to purchase blankets for Lutheran World Relief. With the end of the year, we believe the last of the monies has arrived in the Synod Office. Final tally for 2024 was \$5807.80. That amount of money will allow Lutheran World Relief to purchase over 1100 blankets to help with disaster relief, both nationally and internationally. What a blessing to be able to help those who face desperate situations, through no fault of their own!

Church News & Updates

- Prayer Chain - If you have any names, please call Mary Ann Mapes at 814-266-2185 or the church office. It is not necessary to give any details unless requested by the individual.
- Please remember to pick up your envelopes!!! If you do not see your envelopes, please contact the church office.
- 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.
- 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.
- Some of the ladies from WGMC will be cleaning out and organizing several areas of the church that have become overloaded with seemingly unused/unwanted items. Specifically, the areas are, but are not limited to, the Sacristy off Sander Hall and the kitchen in the Old Lounge. If you have items in those areas that you wish to keep, please remove them or let a member of WGMC know that the items are in those locations for a reason. Usable items not spoken for will be kept for the Yard Sale in the spring.

The Giving Tree for January and February

will benefit The Clothing Closet and The Community Dinner which are held at Franklin St Church.

Every Tuesday, The Clothing Closet offers those in need in our community free coats, clothing, shoes, etc. They run strictly on donations.

Every Thursday, The Community Dinner is available free of charge to anyone who would like a meal or fellowship. Each week, this meal is sponsored by different churches or organizations in the area.

Items that are in great need:

- Underwear and socks. All sizes for men, women or children. *Dark colors are the best.*
- Men's pants, sweatpants, jackets, or hoodies. *These do not need to be new.*
- Hygiene items. Shampoo, body wash, or deodorant.
- Any monetary donations will be used to sponsor a Thursday evening meal.

**MOUNT CALVARY LUTHERAN CHURCH
1000 SCALP AVENUE**

ALL YOU CAN EAT

PANCAKES

**2 SAUSAGE PATTIES OR BACON AND OJ,
MILK OR COFFEE**

\$8

CHILDREN 12 AND UNDER \$5

\$8



Sunday, March 16

9:00AM-12:00PM

www.mt-calvarylutheran.org (814) 266-4859

Tickets are on sale now at the church office!



Camp Connections

Summer Camp Registration is OPEN!



Are you ready for Sequa Summer 2025???

Registration for Summer Camp is now OPEN!

Check out the new programs, the dates of your preferred week of camp, find some friends, and register today!

We can't wait to see you this summer!

Upcoming Events

March 11, 18, 25 & April 1, 8, 15

Tuesday evening Lenten Bible Study on Zoom with Pastors Nathan and Kevin

March 21 - 23

Belong: A Young Adult Retreat

April 25-26

Family Retreat – Love your Mother (Earth Day) retreat

April 26

Benefit Earth Day Run/Walk – Earth Day Challenge

Sustain - An Adult Retreat
Date: February 21-23, 2025
Bowersox Center, Camp Sequanota

This weekend retreat has been created to provide adults a weekend to engage their faith for the journey of life. The resource book guiding our weekend conversation with Richard Rohr's *Falling Upward: A Spirituality for the Two Halves of Life*. With rare insight, Rohr takes us on a journey to give us an understanding of how the heartbreak, disappointments, and first loves of life are stepping stones to the spiritual joys that the second half of life has in store for us.

All are welcome! Register online or call the office at 814-629-6627.

Cost: \$170 (double occupancy)/ \$210 (single occupancy): includes 2 nights lodging & 5 meals

- **Sequanota is now hiring for summer 2025 staff positions**

- Do you know of a young adult that you think could make an impact this summer at Sequanota?

Jess shares: "Sequanota has taught me how to be a good leader, how to interact with people of all ages, and have confidence in all that I do. Camp has given me a place that I know I will always be welcomed at." Give Sequanota a chance this summer — we know camp helps our staff develop as a leader!

- Staff applications are open for Summer 2023! They can apply at <https://sequanota.com/summer/staff/>

- **tend: a bible podcast**

- We believe God plants the seeds of faith in every life. Any good gardener knows that those seeds need tending if the seed is to produce vegetables or fruit. Faith needs to be tended. Our goal is to provide a weekly dose of tending for our faith and others, who might choose to join us as we live into the way of Jesus.

- New episodes released on Mondays. Join the discussion

- **Tend Retreat**

- Where are you filling up your faith? As the church begins to shift to live in our new post-Christian culture. God's people still need a place to be inspired and grow in our faith. It is hard to do weekly Sunday school or Bible study. Come to the Tend Festival to share in intentional time of faith discussions, good music, art, worship, ecology and fellowship

- More information on [Sequanota Events Page](#)

Cleaning out closets or making room for new toys?

Because our clothing sale was such a help to so many in need, the outreach committee has begun collecting toys and clothing for this year's sale. Items can be dropped off in the blue bin out front or in any outreach bin. Thank you!

February 2025

<p>Please sign up in the narthex to serve as acolyte, reader, worship assistant, or usher. Thank you for participating in our worship service.</p> <p><u>Altar Guild</u> – Corlee Louder and Gloria Reed</p>						<p>1 Worship 5:30 PM One meeting 6:30PM</p>
<p>2 Sunday School 8:15 AM Worship 8:45 AM One Meeting 9:30 AM</p>	<p>3 Altar Guild meeting 6:00 PM New Lounge</p>	<p>4 Town Hall Meeting 6:00 PM</p>	<p>5 Mt Calvary Connected deadline Noon The Chosen 6:00 PM</p>	6	7	<p>8 Worship 5:30 PM</p>
<p>9 Sunday School 8:15 AM Worship 8:45 AM Annual Congregational Meeting rescheduled date 10:00 AM</p>	<p>10 Worship & Music Committee 4:00</p>	11	<p>12 Mt Calvary Connected deadline Noon The Chosen 6:00 PM</p>	<p>13 Hilltopper deadline today</p>	14	<p>15 Worship 5:30 PM</p>
<p>16 Sunday School 8:15 AM Worship 8:45 AM Adult class 10:00 AM</p>	17	<p>18 Council 6:30 PM</p>	<p>19 Mt Calvary Connected deadline Noon The Chosen 6:00 PM</p>	20	21	<p>22 Worship 5:30 PM</p>
<p>23 Sunday School 8:15 AM Worship 8:45 AM Adult class 10:00 AM</p>	24	25	<p>26 Mt Calvary Connected deadline Noon The Chosen 6:00 PM</p>	27	<p>28 <i>If you would like to submit an article or announcement to be published in our Hilltopper, please submit all requests to office@mt-calvarylutheran.org</i></p>	



Lent begins with Ash Wednesday on March 5th

March 16, Pancake Breakfast. Sunday 9AM – Noon.

Mt. Calvary's Small Blessings: February 2025

This month, we're celebrating Valentine's Day! It's a holiday where we stop to tell the people most important to us how much we love them and show some special people how much we love them through our actions.

Did you know that God has written a love letter to each of us? The Bible is God's love letter to us. The Bible tells us that God created each of us and that He loves all of us no matter what! It doesn't matter how many mistakes we make or that we're sure to make bad choices, God will still love us. Who is someone you could love no matter what?

Love One another

My command is this: Love each other as I have loved you. John 15:12 (NIV)

Based on John 15:9-17 (NIV)



G Q R J N I L D R Z G F U R G
 C O M M A N D D I M Y T E Z I
 G F S Y J F W J O K H N Y O J
 Q W F L F R U I T W S C P M I
 C H M E R B W Q J F N R U P O
 T L D R I K O B U S I N E S S
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FRIENDS	OBEY	LOVE	FRUIT
DOWN	BUSINESS	BEAR	MASTER
LAY	FATHER	LIFE	REMAIN
SERVANTS	GREATER	COMMAND	CHOSE

1000 Scalp Avenue
Johnstown, PA 15904-3035



The
Hilltopper

Sent with A Prayer To:

February 2025

Mount Calvary's prayer for mission:

Send your Holy Spirit, O Lord, to guide the ministry of Mount Calvary that we may grow together as disciples of Jesus Christ. Inspire our worship, give wisdom to our learning, be the center of our fellowship, encourage our giving, and give zeal to our witness. We ask this in Jesus' name. Amen