

# CALVARY CURRENT

Special Edition for May 1 - 15



## CHURCH NEWS

- 1. Reopening Communities:** As we prepare a “reopening” phase of our communities, our church will prayerfully listen to diverse voices and make a decision for your safety.
- 2. Calvary Virtual Church on Sundays 11am (opening from 10:30am)**  
By electronics: CalvaryUMCnc.org -> Click Virtual Church Info under Worship  
By phones: Call at 980-498-3895 and enter Conference ID: 479 439 471#
- 3. Prayer Updates**  
Ray Smith is doing better, and please continue praying for him.  
For those who are affected by the pandemic – lost their loved ones, lost their jobs, had reduced working hours, closed their businesses, and work in tough conditions.  
For medical professionals on the frontlines and leaders for wisdom and discernment.
- 4. Let's be a cheerful giver!**
  - Mail your offerings to church: 512 West Blvd. Charlotte, NC 28203
  - Use “bill pays” at your online banking or use “Conference Online Giving” at <https://www.wnccumc.org/online-donations-to-churches> (Calvary UMC, Charlotte / Metro District / Pastor Jae Lee / Your Email)
- 5. Face Masks Available**
  - Sharyn Johnson shares face covers with Calvary families. If you need a face mask, please feel free to contact Sharyn.

## TO WHERE? EMMAUS OR JERUSALEM? (Luke 24:28-35)

Sermon on Apr. 26, 20 – Rev. Jae Lee

The Asian immigrant population in the western coast of North America is very large. In Vancouver, San Francisco, Los Angeles, and San Diego, many Asian immigrants have settled down from the

early immigration period. Crossing the Pacific Ocean, it is the closest land from their home countries in Asia. Many of them came to this country to chase their dreams, and at the same time, they had to give up their homes. "Home" is a nostalgic place where immigrants want to come back some time in their future. Whether they succeed or fail in this new country, their motherland constantly remains a home for them.

In the Gospel of Luke 24, two men were heading back to their hometown. Verse 13 of the chapter sets the scene: "Now on that same day two of them were going to a village called Emmaus, about seven miles from Jerusalem, and talking with each other about all these things that had happened." Then in verse 21, "But *we had hoped* that he was the one to redeem Israel." (cf. past perfect tense italicized). By using the past perfect tense, these two disciples showed their disappointment and despair on the death of Jesus Christ! Giving up their hope, they were returning to their hometown! Strictly speaking, the Bible does not say that Emmaus was their hometown, but we can guess that it was a familiar place for them or that they might have some kind of connections in Emmaus.

With the heavy burden of Christ's death, Cleopas and the other disciple did not recognize Jesus, although they were amazed with his knowledge and teaching about God's Word on the way to Emmaus. Personally, I like this story, *two disciples on the road to Emmaus*, because Cleopas was not a famous figure in the Bible, and the other disciple's name is not known at all. They were not on the center in terms of their relationships with Jesus. Rather, they must be on the periphery different from the well-known twelve disciples such as Peter, John or James. I'm not a famous preacher like Billy Graham, Rick Warren, Joel Austin, or Adam Hamilton. Maybe, that's why I cherish this story from the fact that the resurrected Jesus appeared to less-known disciples who were on the margin.

While travelling toward Emmaus, Jesus joined the two disciples and began to teach them the truth of God, but they were not able to recognize Jesus. Dear church, in our pain and trials, sometimes we forget the presence of our Lord. Although Jesus Christ is with us, we may not sense his presence due to the burdens of our pain, suffering, and worries.

When they arrived in Emmaus, Cleopas and his friend urged Jesus to stay with them for the night. Even though they failed to recognize Jesus, they did not forget Christian hospitality. Jesus accepted their invitation and had dinner together. When Jesus blessed the bread, broke it, and gave it to them, Cleopas and his friend finally recognized Jesus Christ the Savior! Then mysteriously Jesus disappeared!

Cleopas and his friend spoke to each other, "Were not our hearts burning within us while he was talking to us on the road, while he was opening the scriptures to us?" Then Luke's Gospel describes that "The same hour they got up and returned to Jerusalem!" in verse 33.

Dear church, I would like to highlight "the same hour." At the very moment Cleopas and his friend learned that it was Jesus who has journeyed with them and taught them the Word of God, they could not stay the night in Emmaus. "The same hour they got up." In fact, they could easily say,

“It is too dark outside; it will be dangerous for us to travel back to Jerusalem at night; we can go tomorrow; we will do it later; we can come to church next Sunday; we may help others and do good works when we get more money; we will be a good Christian when we get older maybe after retirement; and we can work for missions when we have more time...” However, Cleopas and his friend got up at the very moment when they realized the presence of Jesus Christ because they learned that who is still their hope of salvation!

Then they returned to Jerusalem! Why Jerusalem? From the beginning, I intentionally emphasized the importance of home, hometown, and familiar places where we have comfort, connection, and familiarity. Emmaus was the place of avoidance and escaping from the mission that Jesus’ disciples must carry on. On the contrary, Jerusalem was their mission field where they might work hard, fight for God’s justice and truth, and be persecuted for the sake of Jesus Christ. Jerusalem was the place where other disciples – their friends – were still trembling with fear and uncertainty without Jesus. Cleopas and the other disciple decided to come back to Jerusalem in order to share their awesome experience of the risen Christ on the way to Emmaus.

Dear church, where are we heading to? Are we making a right decision toward God and God’s mission? Are we working hard to fulfill God’s vision in our daily lives? Or are we pursuing our complacency and seeking familiar and safe places to satisfy our selfish desire?

Faith is always about “present tense”: Some people may prefer using a past tense or a future tense on their faith. “I used to be a churchgoer” or “I will become a Christian in the future.” However, Christian language always uses the present tense: “I am a witness; I belong to God, or we are the people of God!”

This wonderful story concludes with the re-appearance of Jesus in Jerusalem. While Cleopas and his friend were sharing their amazing experience on the road to Emmaus, Jesus appeared to the whole group and said to them. “You *are* witnesses of these things.” Jesus did not say, “you *used to be* my disciples,” or “you *will* become witnesses.” Rather, he clearly spoke to his disciples, “You *are* witnesses of these things.” Dear church, let us live our faith today here and now toward a right decision in the Lord. Our direction is not for comfortable and familiar places where we may satisfy our human egos. Our direction is toward God who loves us and sends us for God’s mission here and now!

In the name of the Father, of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Amen!

### **MISSION CONTINUES: BLESSING CABINET**

By Brenda Alexander, Chair of Outreach Team

Several years ago, my Sunday School lesson writer included in the information about a Blessing Box that contained food for people in a community. I felt God touching my heart to take on this project to help our Wilmore neighbors. I talked to Wade and Karen Cobb about this project before sheltering in place, and Wade agreed to build the box.

On April 7, Jae notified me that a grant was available through the Reynolds Ministry Fund established by Royce and Jane Reynolds in the United Methodist Foundation. According to it, newly established ministries could qualify, and the deadline for the grant was April 15.

I emailed Jae a copy of the information on the Blessing Box. Jae wrote the grant application, and Wade supplied the drawing for the Blessing Cabinet. Thankfully, Calvary received a \$1,000 grant.

As time was of the essence to apply for the grant, there was no time to get this project approved by the Trustees. After applying for the grant, I talked with Earl Beckham. Hopefully soon, we will be able to meet at the church to choose a location for Blessing Cabinet.

Keeping the cabinet filled with food will be my responsibility. Unlike the Loaves & Fishes pantry, there are no forms to complete, no verifications, and no judgments to make.

Will some people take advantage? Probably, but a lot more people will receive needed food assistance. Blessing Cabinet may become our caring hands and blessings for God's people!

### **ATTIC SALE FOR CHURCH**

Patty Pressley & Julie Gray – Coordinators for Community Attic Sale

Calvary is going to be collecting items for a future attic sale. The sale proceeds will supplement lost income of our church due to the coronavirus outbreak. We will have a date for the sale later once everything calms down. However, during this time we are going to be collecting as much as we can to support our church budget. We will collect items in the Fellowship Hall on Mondays, Wednesdays, and Fridays from 2pm to 4pm. Please feel free to reach out to Patty at 704-499-0201 if you have any questions. Thank you so much for your help and supporting our wonderful church!

### **CHURCH FINANCE REPORT**

By Rachel Graves, Chair of Finance Team

Calvary has been blessed with loyal members who generously give even during these difficult and uncertain times. Thanks to this commitment, our church is able to keep going. I would encourage our congregation to continue this faithful discipline so we can maintain our budget. Although we are current on our bills, we need the contributions to continue to be able to maintain our financial stability. I would like to inform you that the Oasis School is no longer renting our facility. Therefore, the income previously generated of \$15,600 from the school is no longer contributing to our annual budget. The loss of these funds will negatively impact our church from a financial standpoint. The Lord has blessed Calvary immensely over the years even in challenging times, so let us be in thoughtful prayer that we are able to sustain our church. I pray that our Calvary members, family and friends are healthy and we are reunited soon to be able to worship together.

### **CONFERENCE NEWS**

Due to the COVID-19, Annual Conference is postponed to Aug. 8<sup>th</sup> at Lake Junaluska. It will be a one-day conference for essential church business and worship service. Our Pastor Jae Lee is reappointed to Calvary UMC for the year of 2020-2021, and we look forward to growing together to become faithful disciples under his spiritual leadership.