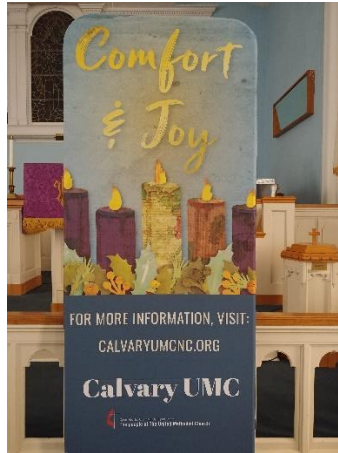


# CALVARY CURRENT

Special Edition for December 2020



*"She will bear a son, and you are to name him Jesus, for he will save his people from their sins." (Matthew 1:21)*

## CHURCH NEWS

### 1. Calvary's Worship & Ministries

Calvary will continue virtual worship service during the winter season through zoom as we consider our members' safety and well-being a priority. Our spiritual journey continues!

### 2. Calvary Virtual Church on Sundays: Silent prayer at 10:55 am (opening from 10:30 am)

By computer: CalvaryUMCnc.org -> Click Virtual Church Info under Worship

By phone: Call at 301-715-8592 and enter Meeting ID: 854 324 5409

\*Our zoom service will be recorded and posted on the church website.

### 3. Special Prayers

For Preston Savage, Gaynell Lail, Ted and Brenda Alexander, Mary Arnold, Mike Earnhardt, Margaret Bumgardner, Mason Butler, Wade Cobb, Daisy Dunlap, Henry and Laretta Forrest, Betty Matthews, Betty Pinion, June Severs, Kathleen Shaw, Faye Smith, Ray Smith, Ruby Vincent (Calvary); Jackie Davidson, Faye Austin, Candy Chastain, Beth Earley, Dina Edwards, Dean McLendon, John Humphrey (Community).

For healing and reconciliation of our nation from the COVID-19 and political divides.

### 4. Let's be a generous & cheerful giver!

\*Mail your offerings to Calvary UMC at 512 West Blvd. Charlotte, NC 28203.

\*Use "bill pays" at your online banking or visit "Conference Online Giving" at

<https://www.wnccumc.org/online-donations-to-churches> (Calvary UMC, Charlotte / Metro District / Pastor Jae Lee / Your email address)

\*Special offerings:

For R & R (Repair & Replace) Funds – Very generous gifts for Breezeway Repair: Preston Savage (& his mother, Anna Lee Townsend), Mary Arnold, Ellen Kim

In memory of Buck Bailes by Henry and Laretta Forrest, Tom Phillips  
In memory of Gaynell Lail's sister by Harding Shinn  
In memory of Becky Beckham's brother by Harding Shinn  
In memory of Patty Pressley's niece by Harding Shinn

## **AWAKE YOUR SOUL WITH HOPE! (Mark 13:32-37)**

Preached on Nov. 29 on the First Sunday in Advent by Rev. Jae Lee

Advent is a new beginning according to the Christian calendar. Advent means "coming," and it indicates the coming of God the incarnate, the Son, Jesus the baby in our human world. When we have a newborn baby in our families, we wait for the arrival of the baby with anticipation of joy and excitement. We have several church families who have welcomed their new babies this year, and I remember their overwhelming joys with babies' arrivals. Likewise, God the incarnate, Jesus the baby's coming is not much different from the birth of an ordinary child.

However, the birth of Jesus Christ is special because he is the one who would save the world. "God so loved the world that he gave his only Son, so everyone who believes in him may not perish but have eternal life" (John 3:16). Jesus is the precious and greatest gift of God who loves the world and wants to save the world. In this season, we usually prepare gifts for our loved ones, and I pray that you share the gift of Jesus in your life with your children and grandchildren.

Advent also means the second coming of Jesus Christ as the King and Eternal Judge on the last day. This second coming of Jesus is emphasized on the first Sunday in Advent.

In Mark's Gospel, Jesus reveals the secrecy of God's time. According to Jesus, no one knows the day and the hour of the second coming of the Lord. Even the angels in heaven and the Son does not know it. In other words, God's time is hidden.

As we do not know the day and the hour, it demands us to be always alert and awakened. What Jesus warns us is our spiritual awakening.

How can we awaken our soul? To be awakened with our soul is to meet our "true-selves" who are created by God after God's image. We are often identified by what we do, what we possess, or what we have accomplished. However, we need to be found by who we truly are.

To wake up their souls and find their true identities, the Early Christians went to deserts to meet God and encounter their true-selves, while waiting for the coming of Jesus away from the temptations of the world. For example, St. Anthony withdrew into the desert and lived there for 20 years in complete solitude to meet God and his true-self.<sup>1</sup> According to Henri Nouwen, through the wilderness experience, St. Anthony lived in complete solitude. He explains that "solitude is the furnace in which spiritual transformation takes place."<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Henri Nouwen, *The Way of the Heart* (New York: Ballantine Books, 1981), 9.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, 10.

In Matthew 4, Jesus himself went to a desert and was tempted: Henri Nouwen describes the temptations of Jesus with a unique view: To be relevant (“turn stones into loaves”), to be spectacular (“throw yourself down”), and to be powerful (“I will give you all these kingdoms”).<sup>3</sup>

Due to the coronavirus pandemic, ironically, we have an opportunity to experience solitude for our spiritual awakening: Solitude is different from the loneliness which is caused by disconnection from God and others. Solitude is an intentional discipline with which we get rid of all things that cover our true-selves, go deeper into the relationship with God, and meet our true-selves. According to Nouwen, it is time for us to face with “just me – naked, vulnerable, weak, sinful, deprived, broken – nothing.”<sup>4</sup>

In this sense, solitude is much more than vacation time on the beach or a retreat in a prayer garden. It is a time for us to discover our real face without a mask and meet our true-selves with transparent honesty. Through solitude, we may see and understand who we really are and we may experience a transformation in the presence of God.

Finally, through solitude, we are invited to awake our soul with hope, not with fear, disappointment, or anger! If we see outer circumstances such as the impact of the coronavirus pandemic or the political and racial divides among us, we cannot but become slaves of fear, disappointment, and anger. Solitude will help us see our true-selves who keep alert and wait for the Lord’s coming into us.

Our true-selves cannot be measured or judged by outer circumstances such as economic possession, educational level, racial difference, religious belonging, or social status. Away from all these categories and judgments, we need to wake up our souls and see who we truly are as the children of God. Then we must live in the hope of Christ’s coming again into our lives.

As we begin a new beginning in 2020 Advent, I invite you and me to awake our souls with hope. Our hope is not an optimistic dream for a better world. Rather, our hope is Christ Jesus who came into us, loved us, and died for us. Our hope is Christ Jesus who loves us today and is with us here and now in our suffering and painful moments. Our hope is Christ Jesus who will come again as the Judge and King who will lead us with love and peace into an eternal home.

Let us awake our souls with hope. Let us keep alert with the spirit of Jesus Christ. Let us be alive here and now with the active practice of solitude in Jesus Christ who is our true hope!

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

## **BLESSING CABINET**

Christmas is about the birth of Jesus Christ, the special gift of God for us. Are you looking for a way to celebrate Christmas meaningful this year? Calvary initiated the Blessing Cabinet Ministry

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<sup>3</sup> Ibid., 16.

<sup>4</sup> Ibid., 17.

to support our local neighbors who are affected by the COVID-19. The Blessing Cabinet is available 24/7. Monetary donations to the Blessing Cabinet can be made via payable check to Calvary UMC and on the memo line, you may write "Blessing Cabinet." If you want to directly buy food and bring them to the Blessing Cabinet, here is the list:

Canned food:

Mixed Vegetables, Canned Tomatoes, Black Eye Peas, Pinto Beans, Cream Corn, Cans of soup, Green Beans, Sweet Peas, Pork & Beans, Turnip greens, Canned fruit

Box Items

Box Spaghetti, Noodles, Macaroni & Cheese, Au gratin Potatoes, Applesauce Cups, Ramen Noodles, Grits, Oatmeal packets, Sleeves of Saltines, Jiffy Corn Muffin Mix, Rice

Canned Meat:

Tuna, Chicken, Vienna Sausage, Luncheon Meat or Spam

Misc:

Peanut Butter, Jelly, Jello (cherry and strawberry), Soap

If you have further questions, please call Brenda at 704-541-6766. Thank you for your support!

Brenda Alexander, Chair of Outreach Team

## **SPECIAL WORSHIP SERVICES**

Christmas Eve Candlelight Service: Dec. 24 at 7pm, prepare a candle for lighting at your home  
Western North Carolina Christmas Service: Dec. 27 at 11am, Bishop Leeland preaching

## **CHRISTMAS BLESSINGS**



"Emmanuel, God be with us, is the gift of God for all people in the world.  
May this Christmas be a time of coming closer to God and praying for others  
so that we grow and deepen our relationships with the living God,  
who loves, cares, and provides us with God's abundance.  
May all of you and your family have a joyous and peaceful Christmas!"

*Love and peace, Jae*