

CALVARY CURRENT

Special Edition for January 2021



“Therefore, prepare your minds for action; discipline yourselves; set all your hope on the grace that Jesus Christ will bring you when he is revealed.” (1 Peter 1:13)

CHURCH NEWS

1. Calvary’s Worship & Ministries

Calvary will continue virtual worship service through zoom. For both “in-person and virtual” worship services in the future, we are preparing a live-steaming service in addition to zoom.

2. Calvary Virtual Church on Sundays: Opening our virtual door at 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 June Severs, Preston Savage, Gaynell Lail, Ted and Brenda Alexander, Mary Arnold, Mike Earnhardt, Margaret Bumgardner, Mason Butler, Wade Cobb, Daisy Dunlap, Henry and Lauretta Forrest, Betty Matthews, Betty Pinion, Kathleen Shaw, Faye Smith, Ray Smith; Jackie Davidson, Faye Austin, Candy Chastain, Beth Earley, Dina Edwards, Dean McLendon, John Humphrey, Howard Noel, Fran Hinson & Skip Kirk, Bryce Wood.

For healing 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:

In memory of Ruby Vincent by Henry & Lauretta Forrest, Ray & Marsha Smith, Terry Frye

For Blessing Cabinet by Henry & Lauretta Forrest, Nancy Short, and Jae & Kim Lee

For Live-streaming Service – A very generous gift by Justin Boyd

SYMPATHY AND PRAYER

We extend our loving prayers for the family of Ruby Vincent who was received into God’s eternal home on Dec. 29, 2020. A memorial service will be held in the church later time!

NEW POSSIBILITY (Mark 1:7-11)

Preached on January 10th by Rev. Jae Lee

Mark's Gospel is the first book among the Gospels, and it does not have the stories of Jesus' birth or youth. It directly moves to Jesus' adulthood and describes his holy baptism. Strictly speaking, it begins with the afterward of Jesus' baptism because it does not say anything about Jesus' baptism itself. Mark's focus is the afterwards of Jesus' baptism. In other words, Mark moves fast toward the ministries of Jesus who teaches the Word of God, heals the sick, and delivers people from their sins.

On this Sunday of the Lord's Baptism, we only know a few things about Jesus' baptism: He came from Nazareth and was baptized in the Jordan River by John the Baptist. Then the heavens were torn apart, and the Spirit of God came down like a dove on him. After that, there was God's voice from heaven: "You are my son, the Beloved; with you, I am well pleased."

Protestant Christians practice two sacraments: Holy Baptism and Holy Communion. This morning I would like to rethink our baptism and its significance for Christlike living.

Whenever I have conversations about baptism with Methodists, we have a dilemma. As we keep a tradition of validating infant baptism, many of us do not remember our baptisms because we were too young to remember them. Different from us, Baptist friends vividly remember their baptismal events because they are rebaptized as they join a church.

While we don't remember our baptisms, they are a very powerful spiritual experience for Christians because our baptism is beyond our remembrance. When we read the baptism of Jesus, we discover that the role of Baptizer John is almost invisible or minimal, and God's active role is obvious and crucial. We truly believe that the host of Christian baptism is the triune God, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. In other words, baptism is not a human thing that your pastor acts and does everything for you. Rather, God's mysterious power and presence are revealed through our baptism. That is why baptism is beyond our human remembrance, and it is the work of Holy God for God's beloved children!

This truth of God's holy work makes infant baptism valid. Baptism is not about our human commitment that we become the family of God by our faith. Rather, it is the grace of God who accepts and embraces us as daughters and sons of God through God's loving adoption. In this sense, baptism is God's gift for us. God welcomes us as who we are regardless of our merit, accomplishment, and even faith. That is why whether we are infants or devout adults, all are equal in God's Holy Baptism.

The spirit of equity in the baptism is crucial because it provides us with the identity as God's beloved children. Baptism equals all people: infant or adult, men or women, black or white, Asian or Latinx, rich or poor, educated or less educated, citizens or foreigners including undocumented strangers, and so on. Through holy baptism, we become one family in God's greater vision that all are equal and have a precious identity as children of God! As God speaks to Jesus, "you are

my son, the beloved, I am well pleased with you,” we are equally loved, welcomed, and embraced by the Lord who created, redeemed, and sustains us.

After Jesus’ baptism, Jesus begins a new way of life as the son of God, and we are the same. Through our baptism, we have stepped into a new world of possibility. The Scripture tells us that “we can do all things through Jesus Christ who strengthens us” in Philippians 4:13. The identity of who we are as baptized by the triune God and adopted as the children of God makes us do greater things in the world. Of course, they will not be done by our power or merit, but by the dwelling power of God who gives us desires to do good works for others.

As baptized people, we are called to desire and follow the heart of God in the world. By our obedience to God’s Will and good works for others, we can make a difference in the world because our true identity is a beloved child of God who makes God very pleased.

The world brainwashes us every day that we are too small, we are too weak, we are too foolish, we are too selfish and divisive, we are too old or too young, we are nothing, our resources are limited and we must compete for survival, and we are just human.

However, today’s Scripture reveals the truth that we are God’s beloved children who can make our God pleased by living a new life. Yes, we can be a contribution to God’s kingdom on earth. When we name ourselves and others as a contribution, according to Roz and Ben Zander, we can produce a shift away from selfishness and engage us in a new relationship with others, making a difference.¹

Dear church, I would like to invite you to practice two things every day: First, say to yourself, “I am a contribution because I am a beloved son/daughter of God.” Second, throw yourself into your life as a loving child of God who makes a difference, working with God. I’m not asking you to change the world or your community, or even your family. Let’s make a difference in your own habits... one at a time. As we practice these two things every day, we will make our God very pleased!

If you are not baptized yet, I gently invite you to be baptized because it will open a new relationship with God. If you are already baptized, let us renew our identities and experience new possibilities in the Lord!

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

BLESSING CABINET

Calvary’s Blessing Cabinet has supported our local neighbors in the midst of a long fight against the coronavirus. 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

¹ Rosamund and Benjamin Zander, *The Art of Possibility* (Boston: Harvard Business School Press, 2000), 63.

“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 any questions, please call Brenda at 704-541-6766. Thank you for your support!

Brenda Alexander, Chair of Outreach Team

CHURCH COUNCIL MEETING

Calvary’s Church Council will be held on Feb. 7 at 2pm via zoom. All council members are requested to attend the meeting. The zoom address will be sent to the council members.

Ray Smith & Becky Pinion, Council Chairs

2021 STEWARDSHIP COMMITMENT: “TOTAL TRUST”

Dear loving Calvary members and friends,

I thank you for your generous and faithful giving in 2020!

This is the time again when we reflect upon our annual giving and stewardship. Due to the pandemic, we had to shift many plans and practices. This year we call our stewardship commitment “Total Trust” with which there will be no “commitment cards” for our annual giving. However, our practice of generosity as a faith discipline will be continued.

Deuteronomy 16:17 says, “All shall give as they are able, according to the blessing of the Lord your God that he has given you.” It is our “total trust” in the Lord to discover the joy of giving even in our difficult times.

Please use 2021 Offering Envelops that you have received from the church for your giving. If you need offering envelops, please feel free to contact Wanda Grant, financial secretary, at 704-573-3189 or pbs7611@att.net and request them.

Rachel Graves, Finance Team Chairperson