

CALVARY CURRENT

Special Edition for February 2021



"He heals the brokenhearted, and binds up their wounds." (*Psalm 147:3*)

CHURCH NEWS

1. Calvary's Worship & Ministries

Calvary will continue virtual worship service via zoom. We will also set up the live-streaming equipment in February for both "in-person and virtual" worship services.

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 is 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, Ray Smith at Calvary; Jackie Davidson, Faye Austin, Candy Chastain, Dina Edwards, Dean McLendon.

For healing of our nation and the world from the COVID-19.

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 World Hunger by Mary Arnold, Nancy Short, Betty Matthews (in memory of Ruby Vincent)

For Repair & Replace Funds (R & R Funds) by Ted and Brenda Alexander

In memory of Ruby Vincent by Gary & Renee Rockett, Herb & Pat Tesh, Gene & Gaynell Lail, Harding Shinn, Tom Phillips, Ted & Brenda Alexander

In memory of Mike Keeter by Terry Frye

SYMPATHY AND PRAYERS

We extend our loving prayers for the families of Mike Keeter and Faye Smith, who have been received into God's eternal home in February. Blessed are the dead who die in the Lord!

"IF WE LOVE ONE ANOTHER" (1 John 4:7-12)

Preached on Feb. 7 by Rev. Jae Lee

How easily we say, "I love you, and I love God!" When we hang up a phone call with our children, we always say, "I love you." Saying, "I love you" has great power as it nurtures our loving relationships. As I preach on the theme of God's love for several weeks, I want to think together "if we love one another," based on 1 John 4.

During our Wednesday Bible Study last week, we had interesting conversations on God's greatest commandment: "Love God and love your neighbor as yourself." When I was young, I thought I must deny myself to love God and others. I did not fully understand the meaning of loving others 'like myself.' I thought that lowering myself is a way of Christian humility. I considered that I must humble myself and that demeaning myself is the way of Christian humility and love for others. Later I learned that Christian humility is not about demeaning myself. Hating myself is a failure to honor and appreciate the goodness of God's creation in me. If you dislike or hate yourself, please pay attention to this sermon. Christian humility is a way of loving ourselves as well as God and others. Without loving ourselves, we cannot love God and our neighbors. Humble Christians recognize their need and dependence on God. According to Kevin O'Brien, "authentic Christian humility helps us rejoice in who we are and whose we are, with all of our gifts and limitations."

1 John 4 speaks to us that we must love one another. For God is love, and love is from God, we must love one another. If we love others, we are born of God, and we know God. If we do not love, we do not know God. By loving one another, John speaks that we can know God because God is love. Loving others is an essential practice for us to get to know God.

According to Ignatius of Loyola, a spiritual leader in the 16th century, there are three ways of love. The easiest way of love is to follow God's law out of Christian duty. God's law commands us to love God and our neighbors as ourselves. It is the fundamental way to love God and love others because God's law commands us to do it. The second stage of love is to cultivate an attitude of interior freedom, finding a balance in our desires and God's law so that we will follow what God wants for us. In other words, as we follow the law of God and love others, we also develop the passion and freedom to love others beyond our Christian duty. The third way of love is much mature practice of love. We move beyond following God's law, and we experience a heartfelt desire to imitate Christ more closely. In this stage, we thrive and love God and others freely with genuine desires from our deepest hearts to follow the image of God and pursue a life of Christlike love. Whatever stage of love we are in, love is more than our words. That is, love requires our actions. Love without deeds is void and lacks an essential reality of love. Love without behavior is not valid!

In this sense, God's love is an excellent example for us. As John points out the love of God, God has sent his only Son Jesus Christ to us and sacrificed the life of Jesus to redeem and save us. God's loving action in Jesus is revealed to us and becomes the love model for us today.

What will happen to us if we love one another? John clearly says that God lives in us if we love one another. When we love one another, we know God not only with our heads but also with our hearts because God's love is visible and enlivened in and among us. When God lives in us, we will also experience the kingdom of God in our daily life. God's reigning presence is with us. Whatever we say and act, we will sense God's presence among us. God's living presence is the most precious gift of love!

If we love one another, God's love is perfected in us. Whatever we do and say in our love, we will experience God's perfection in our loving relationships. There is the fullness of Jesus Christ among us and that we genuinely have the same heart of Jesus in our loving relationships.

If we love one another, we truly understand the heart of God who has first loved us. God created us in the image of God out of love. Sometimes we wonder why bad things happen to us as we love God and others. Sometimes we ask God why God does not love us and does not answer our prayers. However, our love comes from God, who created us in God's loving heart and put God's very image in us. We Methodists believe in God's prevenient grace. Prevenient grace means that God's loving grace is always before us. It is not us but God who initiated our loving relationship.

Nowadays, I rethink our humanity due to the coronavirus. As you know, coronavirus is not a living organism. It is a protein molecule like RNA, covered by a protective layer of fat, which, when absorbed by the cells of human eyes, nose, or mouth, changes its genetic code and converts into aggressors. In other words, coronavirus does not have life. As it is a molecule, it weighs one femtogram. As we have over 100 million cases globally, coronavirus's total weight is only about 1 kg. How come this minimal and lifeless virus can tremendously impact our human lives?

Amid the pandemic, I wonder if we loved one another, the virus might not break out in the world. We don't know precisely how the virus came out yet. But we agree that it came out of human greed to develop and occupy other nature's territories. The more we exploit nature and destroy the ecological system, the more new and different kinds of viruses may come out. If we loved one another, we would not destroy other creatures. If we loved one another, we would not hide coronavirus from the very beginning.

At the same time, I have also seen hope among humans during the pandemic. Many nations, governments, and corporate companies worked together for human beings and developed vaccines. Usually, it takes about ten years to make a new vaccine, but it took only less than a year to have coronavirus vaccines. Thankfully, some of us got the first dose and will have our second shots soon.

If we love one another, what will happen to us? If we love one another, we will honor and respect other lives as well as our own. If we love one another, we will cooperate with others and build

our community into a better place. If we love one another, we will continue to support the needy and care for the weak. If we love one another, we will pray for others from our hearts. If we love one another, we will confess our racial prejudice and embrace others as part of us. If we love one another, we will seek the heart of God, who has created all things equal in God's loving image and give thanks to God with our humble spirit.

If we love one another, we will live today, here and now, with our best efforts, to love God and neighbors! Won't we?

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

LENTEN JOURNEY

Lent is a season of forty days, not counting Sundays – because Sundays are always little Easters – which begins on Ash Wednesday and ends on Holy Saturday. Lent comes from the Anglo-Saxon word, *lencten*, which means "spring." The season is a preparation for celebrating Easter. Historically, Lent began as a period of fasting and preparation for baptism and penance. Let us journey together and make this Lent a season of encountering God in our daily lives. This year we will not have Ash Wednesday Service due to the coronavirus. Instead, we will learn together on Ash Wednesday's meaning on Feb. 17 at 11am via zoom.

THE END OF 2020 FINANCIAL REPORTS AND STEWARDSHIP

On Feb. 7, there was a Church Council meeting, and we had the year-end financial report for 2020. Our budgeted giving has met over 98% of stewardship commitment, and Calvary has been blessed with God's abundance. Out of our generous giving in challenging times, we have overcome our financial scarcity. As your pastor, I am very grateful for your generosity and faith in the Lord. In 2021, our stewardship commitment is "TOTAL TRUST." Even without our commitment cards for annual giving, we will practice our generous giving as a faith discipline. It is our "TOTAL TRUST" in the Lord to discover the joy of giving even in our difficult times. I ask for your continual support for Calvary with your prayers and generous gifts.

Pastor Jae

MANY THANKS

To support our church budget in 2020, we had planned to have a communitywide yard sale, and many of us had brought various collections for the yard sale. However, we had to cancel the yard sale for our members and community's safety and donated all the goods to Kidney Foundation on Feb. 9. We sincerely appreciate your creative ideas and passionate support for Calvary. In particular, we give thanks to Julie and Patty, who planned the yard sale, and those who donated many good gifts and volunteered to help out packaging and load the goods for the Kidney Foundation. We pray that our donations may be a benefit to many people in need.