

A Prayer for Advent and Traditions of Love

I saw them God! The first lights of the season, the first of many that shine in this lovely new town of ours. Yes, it is true! This wonder-filled season of love is upon us! Lights are going up filling the night with color. Decorations and Christmas trees all point to you. The smells of cookies and other baked goods are filling our homes. There is even a little bit of snow out there. The season is upon us, the excitement is beginning to build, and oh, God how I love it. We even got our decorations up. First time in our new house too. Of course, we didn't put them all up, because, well, our third child is fully mobile and abundantly curious. Never-the-less, the tree and stockings are up, the Christmas music is blaring, and we even have our Christmas cards ready to assemble. It feels like we are ready for this wild, beautiful, crazy season of love to begin.

The truth is God, it has me thinking a lot about your advent, specifically, what we all do to prepare our hearts for you. Even the question of why we do it? I mean, we all have a lot of great traditions. Some that date way back. Some that have changed over time. Some that are just starting now. And all of them draw us deeper and deeper into the spirit of the season. They bring us closer to each other and as Christians, closer to you and your presence among us. Which is the whole point of this season, to anticipate and celebrate the birth of your son, Jesus. In fact, we have four weeks of advent dedicated to just that. Preparing and anticipating what that means for each of us and our life together. All of which returns me to this question, how do we prepare our hearts for you? How do we make room to receive your gift of love in Jesus? What does it all mean for our life together?

I ponder these questions for us as a family of faith because they matter. Not in terms of salvation, but for how we live and breathe our faith with each other. They invite us especially during this season, which we all know tends to get overly busy and focused on things like presents and shopping, to keep ourselves focused on what really matters. To stay tuned into the heart of everything we do and experience in Advent and throughout Christmas. They keep our eyes on you so that even as we are reading the paper, a good book, or having a conversation with a friend, we might see you among us. Even as we gather for worship, hear stories from scripture, sing familiar music and new liturgies, we may experience again Emmanuel, you God with us. Which is my prayer to you this day; a prayer for all who call this family of faith home. That in all our traditions this season, whatever they may be, that we may see them as special moments to prepare our hearts for you. Special moments to meet and be met by you God again. And as you do meet us, help us tune in deeper to each other. To care, to love, to walk together as a church family. For that is who we are. That is who you have made us to be. People who care. People who love. People who walk together in Jesus' name. Amen.

Peace,
Pastor Chris

DECEMBER CHALLENGE

Take a drive and check out the Christmas lights. Make note on how they reflect the light of Christ. Then say a prayer of thanksgiving for how Christ's light shines in your life.

Sunday School

We're bringing everyone together for Advent Worship, Sunday School, and Cookie Fellowship on Sunday, December 17 at 9:00am. All Sunday School families and the rest of Calvary will worship together at 9:00am that morning with some bonus Christmas songs, an interactive nativity, and the ultimate message of hope. Instead of Sunday School that day, we will gather in the Fellowship Hall for a Potluck Cookie Party. Bring your favorite cookies to share. We will have something to drink and some fun activities to help prepare even more for Christmas. It's Sunday School Christmas for the whole congregation! See you there.

High School Summer Trip

Now is the time to register for the Senior High Youth trip to the ELCA National Youth Gathering this summer, July 14-22 in New Orleans. The final deadline to register with a \$150 deposit is Wednesday, December 20. We'll meet that night to finalize our roster, answer any questions you might have, and get things rolling with fundraising. This will be an amazing trip when we join 10s of thousands of other Lutheran kids to serve, worship, and learn with the people of New Orleans. The cost of the trip is estimated to be \$1200 with lots of fund-raising opportunities to come (like serving rolls on Sunday, December 12). Be part of this faith-building event.

[Register now on the Calvary website!](#)

Churches United Needs

Churches United is an organization built two decades ago by the combined effort of Bemidji area churches in order to pool our resources to be more effective in assisting those in need. Calvary has been a member congregation since the beginning, and we lift them up as a ministry partner every January.

The week before Thanksgiving, Wanda Yoemans (the executive director of Churches United) sent out an appeal naming a critical lack of volunteers she was facing, and that without additional support, Churches United would be forced to close on Mondays. We, your pastoral staff, brought that issue before the congregation the following Sunday, and less than 24 hours later we had a positive response from the Calvary family, providing Churches United with the help they requested. THANK YOU for being a community willing to step up and be the hands and feet of Christ for a world in need!

If there are others interested in helping at Churches United, there is always a need! Hours are Noon-4:00pm Monday, Tuesday, Thursday, & Friday. Typical work involves welcoming guests and assisting them with filling out applications. Please contact Pr. Jeremiah if you feel called to help!

See Calvary's December Birthdays Here!

[View this newsletter on the web and follow this link to see who to wish a happy birthday this month!](#)

Help Welcome Our New Staff!



If you haven't noticed, we added three new, amazing staff members to our office this fall! Jamie Dahlen began working with us as an Administrative Assistant in September. She does great work, and is always willing to lend a helping hand, answer questions, or make you smile with an okay joke. Stop in and introduce yourself if you haven't had the chance to meet her yet!

We have also hired Samantha Melberg as our Worship Tech Coordinator. Samantha is a familiar face to many of us at Calvary, but we are excited to have her join us as a member of our ministry staff! You can usually find her smiling and running the sound board in the back of the Sanctuary on Sunday mornings and Wednesday evenings during worship.



And we can't forget about our new Teacher's Aide, Elisabeth Lofgren! Elisabeth made an immediate impact on our preschool students. The kids are always happy to see her, and she has been a refreshing, positive presence for the staff and the preschool as a whole.

We are very grateful to have been able to add these three wonderful people to our Calvary family!

Confirmation and Club

Save the date of Wednesday, January 3! Confirmation Classes will move out to Buena Vista for some exciting small group faith formation while hurtling downhill in a group of tubes bound for destiny. It's our annual Tubing Teaching Time and we're hoping everyone will come. We'll ask CLUB kids to join the fun and carpool to make it a party! Watch for more details closer to the event, but mark your calendar now!

The Refuge GRIEF SUPPORT GROUP

Calvary is hosting a grief support group for those who have experienced a death related loss, especially during this holiday season. This is a continuous support group called The Refuge, with group meetings held on Tuesday evenings from 4:00-6:00pm. The Refuge meets in Room 1 at Calvary. No need to pre-register - Contact Erin Kossivi at 813-417-7678 with questions!

Refuge Kids This group is for any child that has lost a close family member (parents, sibling, or primary caregiver). The program is best suited for kids 7-13 years of age. For more information contact Erin Kossivi 813-417-7678.

Monthly Ministry Partner ~ Village of Hope

Calvary cares about homelessness and families, so Village of Hope is a natural partner, especially in these cold winter months.

Village of Hope, a family shelter located in downtown Bemidji, "promotes self-worth and independence through the provision of temporary shelter and supportive services for families experiencing homelessness." The team of advocates there provides a spectrum of essential services to children and families. We're grateful for the work of this organization in our region, and we welcome the chance to support them.

You can give to our monthly ministry partners through RebelGive or by check. In order to help with record keeping, we ask that ALL checks be made out to Calvary Lutheran, with the name of the mission partner (example: "Village of Hope") written in the memo line.



Calvary Happenings

This article featuring New Members, Deaths, and Baptisms will be updated monthly as another way we can stay informed of what is happening in our congregation.

- **New Members:** December 3: Kimberly & Thomas Oustad, Jessie Emond, Brett & Pauline Franklin and Bonnie Dahl
- **Baptisms:** November 12: Nora Velasquez, November 23: Bode Genkinger, November 26: Jadyn Skye Thunder Davis
- **Deaths:** October 27: Joann Strand

Baptisms at Calvary

If you are interested in having your child baptized at Calvary, just contact the church office to get scheduled with us! For more information, [please visit the baptism page on our website.](#)

Invitation to Christmas

Calvary Friends, it is such a joy to share this journey of ministry with you and I am so excited for our first Christmas together. These next four weeks of Advent are sure to build a beautiful anticipation for the celebration of Jesus' birth at Christmas and as we know, there is a lot going on. My prayer throughout this season is that your church home can be a place to connect, rest, and enjoy life together as we near the holiday. And, as Christmas comes, we can celebrate in worship with some deep and meaningful Christmas traditions. Join us for worship on Christmas Eve at 3:30pm, 5:30pm, or 8:00pm. Please note that with Christmas Eve on a Sunday, we will not have our usual morning worship services. All three Christmas Eve services will be identical and will include the singing of carols, a Christmas message, sharing Holy Communion, and of course that beautiful tradition of lighting candles and singing Silent Night. Come grow together and be filled with love as we celebrate the Christ child in worship, and what that means for each day of our lives. Blessings this season friends. I am so excited to worship with you!

Pastor Chris

Advent Worship

Our journey through Advent began on November 26. Each week we are lighting the Advent Wreath, singing a new liturgy written by Pr. Chris, and gathering in the wonder, anticipation, and mystery of Christ's Advent. We will follow the lights of hope, peace, love, and joy, all leading up to the celebration of Christmas on December 24 in worship. It will be a beautiful season to experience Christ's love.

The Angel Tree is Back

RETURN GIFTS TO CALVARY BEFORE DECEMBER 15



Unfortunately, there are many people in our community that are struggling to survive. The Angel Tree presents a great opportunity for you to help families in need by providing gifts to their children this holiday season. All gifts will be given to children within our community.

Stop in the church to see the Angel Tree in the front Narthex. Select an angel (or two or three!) from the tree for which to provide a gift. Please sign out the angel tags that you are selecting on the sign out sheets in the church. All gifts must be returned to the church office in a gift bag, unwrapped, with the angel tag before December 15. This is to ensure we can get gifts to the schools before Christmas break. Thanks for donating to the families and children that may not otherwise receive gifts this season!

2023 Year-End Giving

With the end of the year approaching, it's time to consider any year-end donations you wish to make. To receive credit for your 2023 taxes, please ensure that your donation is provided to Calvary by December 31. Mail in offerings are entered according to the postdate on the mailing envelope, not the date on the check. Please ensure the post office has your year-end donation no later than December 31. Online donations through RebelGive must be made by December 31.

Thank you for supporting all of Calvary's wonderful ministries!

Financial Report

12 MONTH FISCAL YEAR – AUGUST-JULY

General Fund – October

<u>Income</u>	<u>Budgeted</u>	<u>YTD Income</u>
\$93,475	\$98,396	\$237,942
<u>Expenses</u>	<u>Budgeted</u>	<u>YTD Expenses</u>
\$102,245	\$97,357	\$270,257

Cash, Receivables, & Savings: \$79,898

October Ministry Partner: Lutheran World Relief - \$1,236

Calvary Foundation Balance: \$79,898

We want to thank everyone for their continued support as we grow in our ministry together!

Getting to Know Calvary Council ~ Jim Molde

Greetings Calvary!

My name is Jim Molde, an at large member of your Church Council. As I write this, Thanksgiving is a few days away and we are preparing to enter the season of Advent. I hope you all will have had a joyous Thanksgiving with your families, I know some will have an empty place at the table, it is my prayer that you find solace in the memories of your loved ones. At Calvary, I am thankful for our pastoral leadership, our dedicated staff, preschool, youth programs, and the many lay leaders who give of their time and talents.

Advent is the season of preparation for the birth of the Christ Child and the beginning of a new church year. We have been through an eventful year to say the least! The arrival of Pastor Chris ended 18 months of interim ministry, there have been changes in our office staff, and worship and music leadership, a particularly difficult change for me personally. Through all these changes we are reminded that there is one constant, Christ is the leader of Calvary! We must remember this and strive to serve Him at Calvary and in the world. I hope you will take time during this busy Advent season to reflect and prepare for the birth of our Savior. Always remember the "reason for the season," and on behalf of your Church Council, I wish you a joyous holiday season. Go in peace and serve the Lord, thanks be to God.

Jim Molde



Volunteers Needed

Do you want to share your gift of cooking with the congregation? Would you feel fulfilled by helping tidy the kitchen after our Wednesday night meals? Yes?! Consider joining our Calvary Alive crew! We are looking to add to our wonderful group of volunteer cooks and clean up teams. If Wednesday afternoon doesn't work for you to prep a meal, no problem! Meals can be prepared on Tuesday nights for serving on Wednesday.

Come help us make Calvary the place to be on Wednesday nights!

Speak with Kathie Ochowicz or talk to Garrett in the office (218-751-1893) to be a part of this great ministry!

Calvary Alive

December Menu:

- **December 6 - Spaghetti with Meat Sauce**
- **December 13 - Tator Tot Casserole**
- **December 20 - Pizza Burgers & French Fries**
- **December 27- No Programming**

Coffee Fellowship Volunteering

With our fall programming in full swing, we are in need of some helpful folks to sign up to host family fellowship time between our Sunday worship services. We are looking for people that are willing to make coffee, set out and serve snacks and treats, and tidy up following fellowship time. All volunteers, of course, are still encouraged to attend the worship service! You would be able to bring your favorite homemade treats or use packaged treats provided by Calvary.

Sign up as a family or join with friends! We will gladly accept your help on any Sunday. Contact Calvary's office to sign up to serve your fellow parishioners in this fun and meaningful way!

Opportunities to Connect

Quilters - Thursdays 9:00-11:00am

Men's Breakfast & Bible Study - Wednesdays 8:00am

Martha Circle - Every 3rd Tuesday of every month 1:00-3:00pm

Hope Circle - Every 3rd Tuesday of every month 9:30-11:00am

Marigold Circle - 1st or 2nd Monday every of month 10:00-12:00pm

Senior Group - 3rd Friday of every month 12:00-1:30pm

For more information about the different groups please contact the front office 218-751-1893.

Help Wanted:

Head Usher/Host for Sunday services: This role would be the connecting person between the worship staff and the worship hosts for the particular service. Visit with or email Pr. Jeremiah at revholst@calvarybemidji.org to find out more!