



2508 Washington Ave SW  
Bemidji, MN 56601

## *The Relentless Pursuit*

A Four-Part Devotional Series on Luke 18 and the hymn "Come Thou Fount of Every Blessing"

### *Part 2: A Meeting of Hearts*

*Come, thou Fount of every blessing, tune your heart to sing my grace;  
Streams of mercy, never ceasing, call for songs of loudest praise.  
I'll teach you some melodious sonnet sung by flaming tongues above.  
Praise the Mount I'm fixed upon it, Mount of my redeeming love.*

Really God?! My favorite hymn. Yeah, of course you would use those words to speak me, and don't think I didn't notice what you did there, changing the perspective of the verse as if you were singing to me. Honestly, it was really quite beautiful. That is what you do. You find something in our lives that speaks to our hearts and then you reach out. A meeting of hearts if you will. Well, good job, because you know I love the melody, and how Robert Robinson, the author, weaves his own story of faith into this hymn. His story is so real. A living, breathing person wrestling with life and choices frankly like any one of us. His mother had dreams for him to become a clergy man, but seriously what young man wants that. You have to be just a little nuts to be a pastor. Of course he didn't. In fact, he said he found the whole concept of church and faith to be a bit of a joke. He ran pretty far from you, even at one point in his life getting into quite a wild and reckless scene of partying and drinking. Then there was that moment where he and his buddies got pretty tuned up and went to a fortune telling woman just to make fun of her. It probably would have been a sight to see. Well, you were there, and I am not sure he really got what he was looking for because rather than laughs, she said some things that really caught him off guard. She predicted that he would live to an old age and have a beautiful family. She said that his life would be very different, full of meaning and joy. What a surprising response.

I am not sure what seeds you were planting that night, but some fire sparked within him. The next thing he knew was that he was visiting a preacher named George Whitefield, and hearing him speak, or specifically you speaking through him, changed everything in his life. Imagine that, well of course you did, Robinson became a preacher.

You really didn't give up on him did you? Your relentless love pursued him into the darkest points of his life. You found him, where he never thought you would. You retuned his life when his song was way out of tune.

Is that what your never ceasing streams of mercy are all about? The melodious sonnet you sing which draws us close to you? I mean, just think about Christmas. That sure was an unexpected way to enter in the course of human history. Your light coming to shine in a dark world. Is this where your heart meets ours in your relentless pursuit of your beloved?

Peace  
Pastor Chris

*We will Continue with part 3 of The Relentless Pursuit in the January Newsletter*

## Voices of Christmas

### PART 1 - 2025 ADVENT WORSHIP SERIES

Advent is a season of mystery, anticipation, and wonder all surrounded in the love of God. This year, you are invited to begin a special journey in worship that will continue through the next couple of years. Join us as we witness characters of the Christmas story come to life and bring voice to their story. They will help us imagine the moments that surrounded Jesus' birth and draw us into the mystery and wonder of God's story of love. May these Voices of Christmas bless us all as we dive deep into the spirit of Christmas, anticipating the hope, peace, love, and joy come down from heaven.

**November 30** - Hope and the Voice of Isaiah  
**December 7** - Peace and the Voice of a Shepherd  
**December 14** - Love and the Voice of Mary  
**December 21** - Joy and an Interactive Nativity



## Christmas Eve Worship



Join us for worship as we celebrate God's gift of love in Jesus on Christmas Eve, December 24. Worship is at 3:30pm, 5:30pm, and 8:00pm, or you can tune into the livestream on the Calvary website. All services will include Christmas carols, the Christmas story, sharing Holy Communion, and of course, that beautiful

tradition of lighting candles and singing Silent Night by candlelight. It is sure to be a wonderful celebration of Christ's love. Bring your family, invite your friends, and let's worship God together!

## Did You Know?

Unless asked, hospitals don't alert pastors when their congregation members are admitted. If you would like Pr. Chris or Pr. Jeremiah to visit you while you're hospitalized, please don't hesitate to reach out to us at church! We would love to come and pray with you. For those who worship online at home, hymnals and bibles are available for use - Please let us know if you'd like one of the Caring Friends Ministry Team Members to make a delivery and a visit!

## The Food Shelf



The food shelf board of directors and staff are so honored and excited to receive \$17,500 from the 100 Plus Women Who Care Event this year. Thank you to everyone who in some way has benefited the food shelf either financially, donating goods, or

volunteering to help those in our community who are in need. We are grateful for all of your support!

### CALVARY ALIVE DECEMBER MENU:

**DEC. 3** - SWEDISH MEATBALLS/MASHED POTATOES

**DEC. 10** - GOULASH

**DEC. 17** - BUILD YOUR OWN SANDWICH/ POTATO SOUP

\*Vegetarian & Gluten Free  
Options Available



## Hangin' with Matthew:

### A JOURNEY THROUGH THE GOSPEL OF MATTHEW

**Where:** Calvary Lutheran Church - Led by Pr. Chris

**When:** Wednesday Evenings at 7:15pm, January 7 through February 11

**Who:** Everyone is welcome

**Cost:** Free but bringing treats is welcome

**What:** Join us for six weeks as we journey through the Gospel according to Matthew. Experience God's story of love and the hope it brings for your life. All you need to bring is you and your favorite Bible, whatever translation you like and preferably one you are comfortable writing in. Come to learn, share, and listen as we grow together as Christ's people. Formed in love - growing in love - sent in love.

## Altar Guild

Interested in helping out with the behind-the-scenes work for worship? Come check out the Altar Guild! We'll be having a short Altar Guild training session on Wednesday, December 3 at 5:30pm. Talk to Pr. Jeremiah for more information!

## Lunch & Learn

**DECEMBER 16, 12:00PM - 1:00PM**

### A History of Christmas Carols

'Tis the season to be jolly, and what could be more jolly than gathering around food, singing, and storytelling as Pr. Chris leads a discussion about our favorite Christmas Carols and how they came to be. Let Heaven and Earth rejoice!

## First Communion

Hey, 5<sup>th</sup> grade families. Save the date for your First Communion Class on Wednesday, January 21 at 7:15pm. We'll celebrate Holy Communion together on Sunday, January 25 at the 9:00am worship service. More details coming.

## Sunday School for the Whole Congregation

We'll be worshipping together on Sunday, December 21 as a whole congregation with one service at 9:00am. Mark your calendars and bring your friends and family for a fun and meaningful celebration of the story of Jesus birth as told by everyone in the room. We'll gather together in the Fellowship Hall for a Potluck Cookie Party. Bring a dozen of your favorite cookies to share. We'll provide some fun family activities. (Reminder: No Sunday School on Wednesday, December 24 or Wednesday, December 31 or on Sunday, December 28.)

## Senior High Youth Houseboat Trip



Senior High Youth weigh anchor on another houseboat trip this summer on Rainy Lake, July 12-17. Register now with the QR code or visit <https://forms.office.com/r/mgQsXypnFp>. It will be a great time to unplug, relax, and revitalize our faith in God's creation. Contact Brett with any questions at [bcarter@calvarybemidji.org](mailto:bcarter@calvarybemidji.org).

## See Calvary's December Birthdays Here

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

## December Ministry Partners: Village of Hope & Evergreen Youth & Family Services



For our December monthly ministry partner, we're getting a two-for-one! We're partnering with two of our local emergency shelter providers: Village of Hope and Evergreen Youth & Family Services. Village of Hope is a family shelter located in downtown Bemidji that "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.

Evergreen is a local non-profit that has been providing shelter and care for youth and families for almost 50 years. Every year, over 1,000 children, youth, and young families come to Evergreen for emergency food and shelter, mentoring, independent living skills training, counseling, parenting classes, housing assistance, and suicide prevention.



**Evergreen**  
Youth & Family Services  
*Strengthening Youth. Preserving Families.*

We're grateful for the work of these organizations in our region, and we welcome the chance to support them! All monthly ministry partner funds raised this month will be split between Village of Hope and Evergreen. 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 "December monthly ministry partner" written in the memo line.

### Preschool Christmas Programs

Calvary Preschool will be having its Christmas Programs on Wednesday, December 17 and Thursday, December 18 at 3:00pm. The children will be singing joyous songs of Christmas and telling the Christmas story in their very own words. The program will be followed with treats and fellowship in the Fellowship Hall. You are all invited to join in the fun!

### Preschool Closed

Calvary Preschool will be closed from Monday, December 22 through Friday, January 2 for Christmas Break. Enjoy some meaningful time with friends and family!

### Calvary Office Closed

Calvary Lutheran Church office will be closed Thursday, December 25 through Friday January 2. We will open back up January 5. We hope you enjoy this holiday with your family and friends. Worship on December 29 will be a lessons and carols service at 9:00am .



Men's Breakfast & Bible Study - Wednesdays 8:00am at Perkins  
Martha Circle - 3<sup>rd</sup> Tuesday of every month 1:00-3:00pm  
Hope Circle - 3<sup>rd</sup> Tuesday of every month 9:30-11:00am  
Marigold Circle - 1<sup>st</sup> or 2<sup>nd</sup> Monday of every month 10:00-12:00pm  
Senior Group - 3<sup>rd</sup> Friday of every month 12:00-1:30pm at Giovannis  
Quilters - Every Thursday 9:00-11:00am  
Choir - Every Thursday 5:30-6:30pm in the Sanctuary

#### GRIEF SUPPORT GROUPS

The Refuge - 2<sup>nd</sup> & 4<sup>th</sup> Tuesday of every month, 4:00-5:30pm in Room 1 at Calvary (Erin Kossivi 813-417-7678)  
Refuge Kids - Weekly, Fridays at Bemidji Covenant Church Family Life Center from 4:30-5:30pm (Erin Kossivi 813-417-7678)

### Salvation Army Bell Ringers Needed

Calvary is scheduling bell ringers again this year at Lueken's South as we have done the last few years. Bell ringing begins the day before Thanksgiving and continues until Christmas Eve. You can sign up on the chart in the Narthax at Calvary or you can contact Len Ochowicz at 320-364-3117.

### Meals on Wheels

Our next opportunity for Calvary volunteers is in the month of December. We are asking for drivers & delivery people on December 29, 30, and January 2. These are difficult times to ask for volunteers, but if you have a couple of hours to help us out that would be greatly appreciated!! Please contact Len Ochowicz at 320-364-3117.

### 2025 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 2025 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 – JULY-JUNE

#### General Fund – October

| <u>Income</u>   | <u>Budgeted</u> | <u>YTD Income</u>   |
|-----------------|-----------------|---------------------|
| \$109,071       | \$105,869       | \$375,594           |
| <u>Expenses</u> | <u>Budgeted</u> | <u>YTD Expenses</u> |
| \$125,138       | \$106,532       | \$391,449           |

**Cash, Receivables, & Savings:** \$87,278

**Oct. Ministry Partner: Lutheran Campus Ministry** \$1,192

**Calvary Foundation Balance:** \$59,088

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

# A Message from Calvary Council ~ Heidi Fladeboe



Hello Calvary Family!

As the seasons change and we brace for colder winds, I'm reminded of the many seasons and life changes my family and I have experienced in our 20+ years of being members here at Calvary. So many memories come to mind: our kids going through preschool, getting their first Bibles, sharing their statements of faith as confirmands, and witnessing to God on amazing mission trips. I've been blessed to be a part of the music ministry here, and have felt the Holy Spirit move through our worship, giving me goosebumps every time! This space has truly become home to me, and the relationships I've been blessed with, like an extended family. When I walk into the sanctuary, I feel a peace that only God can extend. And I am reminded that, although things constantly change and the seasons come and go, our God remains the same. His love never ceases, His word remains true, and we are always held in His faithful hands. What an awesome promise!

I'm so excited to take on the new role and responsibility of Council Member this year. I look forward to this opportunity to listen, pray, and to continue our mission here at Calvary: gathering to worship, connecting with Jesus, and serving our neighbors. And as Advent approaches, God invites us to take a breath in the middle of the busyness and distractions to reflect: on the year almost past, on the countless blessings in our lives, and on what He has taught us in the midst of hardship and loss. Advent is also an opportunity to imagine where God might be calling us as we step into a new year. How can we be used here on Earth as His hands and feet? Who will He place in our paths to give us an opportunity to show His love humbly and without boundaries? Can we boldly say, as we face the unknown: "Spirit, lead me where my trust is without borders"? My prayer is that, as a church family, we can join hands and walk into 2026 with a new sense of purpose, and an urgency to share the Gospel with a world that so desperately needs it.

May you feel God's unending presence and love during this season of Advent! May you feel a new sense of excitement and hope when you stop to consider the awe-inspiring truth that God sent His one and only Son, Jesus, to be a atoning sacrifice for us! What an AMAZING gift!

"...and He will be called Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace." ~ Isaiah 9:6b

Heidi Fladeboe - Member at Large - Church Council

## Stewardship Nuggets

As we near the end of the year, we wanted to give you a few financial updates for our church family as they relate to mission support. First, what is mission support? **Mission support is defined as the financial gifts given from those who call Calvary home, to support God's mission through our life together.** These gifts come in through worship offerings, RebelGive online donations, as well as various other charitable means. As of November, we are trending about 2.27% behind where we were at this time last year. That is a bit concerning and we are asking each other to step up together to right this trend. Every gift matters as all of our ministries are supported 100% by the gifts of those who call Calvary home. As we near the end of 2025, please consider making a special gift to help our church catch up to its financial needs. As for my family, we plan to double our regular monthly offering for December. Here are a couple of other ideas on what you can do to help:

- Would you consider making a special Christmas gift this year for your church family? Enjoy a meal and decide together as a family what that can look like.
- Have you set up weekly or monthly automated giving with RebelGive as part of your family's giving practices? If not, please consider it now. Garrett would welcome that conversation.
- Do you have any Thrivent Choice dollars that still need to be given?
- Do you need to make any charitable gifts for tax purposes? If so, Calvary is a great place to make those gifts.
- Would you like to donate stock? We have a way to receive that gift as well.

We know that together we can rise to meet this challenge. Not only that, but to fulfill some big ministry dreams of growing our music ministry, senior ministries, and connection ministries. There is a lot of joy abounding and it is clear that we believe in this mission we share; to gather, connect, and serve shining God's love into the world. You are such a blessing. You are sharing God's love. I thank God for who you are and for the gift it is to walk together. God's peace, dear siblings in Christ.

Pr. Chris and the Stewardship Ministry Team.

## Stewardship of Land Update

A special thanks to all who joined the conversation around our values, mission, and vision as a church family. We had over 200 people engaged in the stewardship of land forums. The conversations were rich, the ideas plentiful, and the fellowship was faithful. There is still time to share an idea if you wish. Just write it on a Post-it in the Fellowship Hall and add it to the board.



## Special Thank You



A special thank you to all those who spent time bringing the season to life through decorating the church, Sanctuary, Fellowship Hall and the preschool space. The light of the Christ child continues to shine at Calvary each day. Thanks for all you do to make this season special.

## The Giving Tree

Stop in the church to see the Giving Tree in the front narthex. Select an angel (or two or three!) from the Giving Tree for which to provide a gift. Please sign out the angel tags that you are selecting on the sign out sheets of the specific color. 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.

