



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 3: Seeking and Being Sought

*Here you will raise your Ebenezer; "Hither by my help you've come";
And with hope, by my good pleasure, you'll safely to arrive at home.
My son sought you, a stranger, wandering from the fold of your God;
Jesus rescued you from danger, interposing his own precious blood.*

It changed him didn't it? The author of this Hymn, Robert Robinson. Jesus' precious blood changed him in a way he never imagined, yet most deeply needed.

It makes me think of Jacob from the Old Testament. That time in his life when he wrestled all night with that 'being'. I have to ask, it was you, God wasn't it, meeting him in an unexpected encounter in his life? I mean, there you two got into it. You argued. You fought. You wrestled as he challenged you and questioned you. It was a physical, emotional, and spiritual engagement which in the end left him scared and changed. Yet still he would not let you go. He demanded your blessing be given. I suppose because he knew it would change everything for him and his life with you. Not just for him, but for his family, and the way he would engage this world. He would never be the same again. His limp may have represented that outwardly, but he was changed deeply within. You even changed his name to Israel. What a moment for his life!

An encounter with you does change everything doesn't it? Sometimes physically. Sometimes spiritually. Sometimes emotionally. Whatever the case, after it, we are indeed changed. Life is different. We are different. Perhaps that is a bit scary. Maybe that is why we sometimes run from you. Afraid of how we may be changed. Afraid that our life will take a course we didn't anticipate. So we run, ignore, live by our desire rather than yours. Sometimes that brings pain. Sometimes that brings guilt and shame and you know how devastating those emotions are for us. You gave us free will so we could freely live. Which also means freely love. It brings such colors to life; colors which those dark emotions tends to dull. Sometimes even cloud all together which must bring you great sadness. Life is meant to be so much richer than that. Is that why you will stop at nothing to pursue us? Is that why you relentlessly run after us? Is that what it truly means to be sought after in your love? All so we will experience what you have created for us to experience.

Being sought when we are strangers wandering from your fold... your family... your life... Which is what your open arms offer... Life... truth... hope which leads us home... All by your son's precious blood...

Abba... Father... I am so sorry that your son's life is what it took to give us salvation. I know we will never truly know how much it cost to see our sin upon that cross. Please lead us to worship. Lead us to bow down at your son's feet. Lead us to say that you are our God not just when it is convenient for us, but in every aspect, question, joy and sorrow of our lives.

Peace,
Pastor Chris

A Lenten Devotional for 2026

We would like to build a Lenten devotional booklet for 2026 to accompany the season as a resource to walk with you at home. We are seeking 40 short devotions, written by our members to share both their faith and love for Jesus. All devotions must be submitted in January of 2026. If you are interested in contributing, here are the details for creating a devotion:

1. Each devotion should include a short scripture, a personal reflection, and short prayer at the end.
2. In total, each devotion should be no longer than half a page in length.
3. When you have completed your devotion, please send it to Pr. Jeremiah or Pr. Chris. We will format it for the booklet.

Should you have any questions, please feel free to contact Pr. Chris at RevLeach@calvarybemidji.org or Pr. Jeremiah at RevHolst@calvarybemidji.org. Thanks for helping create this resource for our people!

Hangin' with Matthew

A LENTEN JOURNEY THROUGH THE GOSPEL OF MATTHEW

Where: Calvary Lutheran Church - Led by Pr. Chris

When: Wednesday Evenings at 7:15pm or after Lent Mentoring, February 18th - March 25th

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 Matthew's connections to the deep traditions of the faith. 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 church. Formed in love – growing in love – sent in love.

Family Fun Day

Save the date for Sunday, February 1 for our next Calvary Family Fun Day. We'll have a simple lunch following the 10:30am Connections worship. We'll plan on creative crafts, board games, light lunch/snacks, gym time, music, and movies from 12:00pm - 1:30pm. Bring your whole family (and friends) and join us for a time of laughter, excitement, and fun!

Faith Family Project

January 18 is another Sunday for families working together for Sunday School. We'll gather for a Faith Family Project that starts with worship at 10:30am and continues in the Fellowship Hall. We'll work together to create something special. It's a chance to be together with all the people involved in Sunday School in a creative and fun way. Plan on attending and take this chance to invite a friend.

Camp Sunday

Don't miss out on our special day to announce another summer of camp experience for all ages at Camp Emmaus. On Sunday, January 11 we'll have camp staff here to fill us in on all the opportunities for camp this summer. We'll have brochures, a video, and pictures from last summer. It will be your chance to find out more and to get a jump on early registration. Camp is an amazing experience that we hope everyone can have. Join us for the fun on Camp Sunday, January 11.

Senior High Houseboat Trip



2026 Senior High Houseboat Trip

Senior High youth are heading out to sea (aka Rainy Lake) again this summer for a houseboat trip July 12-17. It's like Bible camp on a boat with lots of swimming, relaxing, campfires, and good food, all in God's creation with little to no technology available. We'll unplug and create some lifelong memories. Cost for the trip is \$700 which includes the houseboat, food, transportation, t-shirt, adult leaders, and more. Space is limited, so register by February 1 to be part of the fun. Scan the QR Code or visit <https://forms.office.com/Pages/DesignPageV2>. Talk to Brett for more information.

Sunday School on Wednesday

HELP WANTED

We're looking for someone (or a couple people) willing to facilitate the Sunday School lesson on Wednesday. Everything is planned ahead of time, usually including a video, a lesson, Bible time, and sometimes an extra project from Sunday. It's a great opportunity to interact with families who attend Sunday School on Wednesday together. They're doing the teaching at their tables, and they need you to welcome them and shepherd them along each week. Sunday School on Wednesday meets after worship till approximately 8:15pm. Contact Brett if you would like to be part of the fun (bcarter@calvarybemidji.org) or 218-210-2622.

Middle School Youth Trip



2026 Middle School Adventure Serve

Middle School Youth will travel to Duluth for an Adventure Serve trip June 14-15 this summer. Kids will participate in a day of service and a day of fun and make some memories along the way. Cost for the trip is \$300, which includes transportation, lodging, meals, admission, and adult leadership. It will be a great experience aimed at giving youth an introduction to service and adventure as part of faith formation. Watch for more details as plans are finalized. Registration is open now! Scan the QR Code or visit <https://forms.office.com/Pages/DesignPageV2>. If you're interested in traveling along as an adult leader, talk to Brett soon.

See Calvary's January Birthdays Here

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

January Ministry Partners: Pathways Bible Camp



Our January monthly ministry partner is Pathways Bible Camp ministry! Offering programming at Camp Emmaus as well as traveling day camps, the staff of Pathways provides the unique Bible Camp experience to campers of all ages. Through nature and time set apart in welcoming community, campers leave renewed to live lives of Christian service and love.

To support Pathways, (or any of our other monthly ministry partners), you can donate online through RebelGive by selecting the Second Offering Monthly Partner, or by giving a check to Calvary with "Pathways Bible Camps" in the memo line.

Preschool Closed

Calvary Preschool will be closed through Friday January 2 for Christmas break. Enjoy some meaningful time with friends and family! The Preschool will also be closed Monday, January 19 for Martin Luther King Jr. Day.

Preschool Partners with ADS

The preschool is excited to announce our renewed partnership with Adult Day Services in 2026! We will be taking field trips to their facility to participate in activities with their clients, share music, and learn from each other. We will be teaching our kids how to serve others in our greater community. We are eager to carry on this tradition and continue the mission that Calvary Lutheran Church started for Adult Day services. It will be an excellent opportunity for our preschool students!

Calvary Office Closed

Calvary Lutheran Church office will be closed Thursday, December 25 through Friday, January 2. We will resume regular office hours on Monday, January 5. We hope you enjoy this holiday with your family and friends. We will still hold a Lessons and Carols service on Sunday, December 29 at 9:00am.

Opportunities TO CONNECT

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

GRIEF SUPPORT GROUPS

The Refuge - 2nd & 4th 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)

First Communion



We are gathering all 5th graders and their families to celebrate the gift of holy communion as a class on Sunday, January 25 at the 9:00am worship service. We ask that the students and a responsible adult attend a class on Wednesday, January 21 at 7:15pm in Calvary's lounge to learn a little bit more about this gift and to paint a special communion cup. Please scan the QR Code or use this link to help us know who's coming <https://forms.office.com/Pages/DesignPageV2>. Our congregation is so excited to celebrate this milestone with your family and we hope you can be part of it.

New Member Orientation

Interested in becoming a member of Calvary? New member orientation will be held on Thursday, January 29 at 6:00pm. Come and find out how to officially join the family! Contact Pr. Jeremiah at RevHolst@calvarybemidji.org for more information, or just stop in the front office.

Donation Statements

Unless you have requested otherwise, your 2025 donation statement will be sent out via email to the address we have on file. Please review your donation statement to ensure the donations shown match your records. If they don't, reach out to Garrett by January 31 to make any adjustments or corrections.

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

FINANCIAL REPORT 12 MONTH FISCAL YEAR – JULY-JUNE

General Fund – November

<u>Income</u>	<u>Budgeted</u>	<u>YTD Income</u>
\$103,386	\$105,869	\$478,980
<u>Expenses</u>	<u>Budgeted</u>	<u>YTD Expenses</u>
\$114,313	\$126,786	\$505,762

Cash, Receivables, & Savings: \$90,675

November Ministry Partner: Peoples Church \$2,137

Calvary Foundation Balance: \$60,278

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

A Message from Calvary Council ~ Tom Hatfield



Hello Calvary,

My name is Tom Hatfield, and I will be serving as one of your Church council members for the next two years and I will also be serving on the Stewardship of Land Task Force.

My wife, Heidi, and I have been members of Calvary since 2011. When we first moved to Bemidji, we began looking for a Church to join. When we walked through the doors here, we knew this was the congregation that we wanted to join. Our kids were middle school and elementary age at that time, and we wanted to be part of a thriving youth ministry. But more important than that, we wanted to be part of a Church where the Spirit was present and active in the congregation that served all ages. Our family has been blessed by being part of this community of believers both during highs and lows in our lives. Now that our children have grown, Heidi and I are getting used to this new phase of life, and we are excited to see where the Spirit may lead us.

As we enter into the new calendar year, we think about the many blessings that God has shown Calvary and how we will continue to move forward. As a Church family, I am confident that this Church will continue to flourish. A couple of last thoughts before I wrap this up - When I worship here, I often reflect on Mathew 11:28-30, "Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you and learn from me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For my yoke is easy and my burden is light." Also, something a wise old pastor once said, "It is difficult to grow your faith without worship." It has been an honor to worship here with all of you.

May Calvary continue to be a blessing to this community in spreading the Good News!

God Bless,

Tom Hatfield - Church Council Member at Large

Stewardship Nuggets

Well friends, with the changing to the new year comes the invitation to reaffirm our financial commitments to our life together. Your mission support, (that is the financial gifts you make to support our life together as a church family), empowers not just the work we do or the connections we make when we gather, but also reaches out to share God's love, both locally and across the world. Every dollar in Calvary's nearly 1.3 million dollar budget is given by those who call Calvary home as well as those who share in our Preschool Ministry. Your gift matters. You matter, and I thank God for who you are and how you empower our life together! With the new year comes some important questions to consider:

- What financial commitment can you and your family make to support our life together in 2026?
- Do you want to make that gift weekly, monthly, quarterly, or annually?
- 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.
- Are you able to grow your financial gifts this year to Calvary as our mission continues to grow as a church?

We are looking to step into some big ministry dreams of growing our music ministry, senior ministries, and connection ministries. Come, join the mission and let's run the race God has marked out for us. God's peace, dear siblings in Christ.

The Giving Tree is Complete A SPECIAL THANK YOU

Thank you to everyone for donating to the families and children that may not have otherwise received gifts this holiday season! In the 21 years of doing this, seeing the support from everyone to make a kid smile at Christmas time is so amazing!

Bonnie Jevning



A Moment of Thanksgiving

A special thank you to all those who made the Advent and Christmas season so special for us as a church family. The decorations were beautiful. The Christmas lights shown bright. The voices of Christmas monologues drew us into God's story in new ways. The musicians touched our hearts with melodic joy. The altar guild shared God's meal with us at all services. The greeters were welcoming, the meal crews fed our souls, the worship assistants served us in worship, and all who gave of their time and talents have blessed us in profound ways. To you we give thanks. You are amazing!

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!

CALVARY ALIVE

JANUARY MENU:

- JAN. 7 - TRADITIONAL CHILI OR WHITE CHICKEN CHILI
- JAN. 14 - SLOPPY JOES MACARONI AND CHEESE
- JAN. 21 - TATOR TOT CASSEROLE
- JAN. 28 - BAKED POTATO BAR WITH TOPPINGS

*Vegetarian & Gluten Free Options Available