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Bemidji, MN 56601

Why Lutheran?

I have found myself reflecting this summer on the question of 'why Lutheran?' In a world of religious choices and many denominations, why is it here, at Calvary Lutheran Church that we stand? What is it about this faith that resonates so deeply within our hearts? I would imagine that there are a lot of things for each of us which help answer this question, but let's begin with the story of a man named Martin Luther; a man whose life took an unexpected turn and began the story of the church we call home.

Martin Luther was born in Eisleben, Germany in 1483. He was born to a Catholic family and expected to be baptized Catholic, marry a Catholic, practice as a Catholic, and be buried as a Catholic. So he grew up in the church, raised by faithful parents and attended religious schools. He was like many of us: a faithful person living his life as best he could. Eventually he attended law school by his father's encouragement, and though he was not terribly committed to the church during these years, he was a good and promising student with a great future ahead of him.

Between Martin Luther's 3rd and 4th years of law school, something happened. He was traveling and caught just outside the forest in a fierce thunderstorm. With lightning flashing everywhere, thunder rolling overhead, and the rain pouring down on him, Luther thought he would die. So he called out to God for help, vowing to enter a monastery if God would save him from the storm. He did survive by what some might call fate or luck, but Luther described it as God pursuing him, leading him to a life in the church which was rather different than his family's plans to be a successful lawyer. It did not stop there. Luther became a professor and poured his life into teaching at the University of Wittenberg. He exposed the students to the Word of God in the Old and New Testaments and preached regularly. He also spent a lot of time in isolation as a monk where he became seriously concerned about his soul's salvation and began to struggle very deeply with his Catholic upbringing. He wrestled with his shortcomings, inadequacies, and times where he failed to be a perfect Christian. He was sure that God could not and would not love such a person. However, the more he studied Scripture, the more he discovered passages like this: "By the tender mercy of our God, the dawn from on high will break upon us, to give light to those who sit in darkness and in the shadow of death, to guide our feet into the way of peace." (Luke 1:78-79) In scripture Luther met God who loved him with a tender mercy. God who would send his only Son not for perfect people but for sinners. God who would never abandon him, but would stand by his side no matter how far he fell or how much he failed.

This new discovery was powerful and Martin Luther began to tell the world about God the Father who claims us in the waters of baptism and never lets us go. He taught about Jesus who relentlessly pursues God's children into the darkest places of the world, not to condemn them but to save them. He wrote about the Holy Spirit which transforms our lives, so that even while we continue to sin, God makes us more and more his people. In a religiously oppressive culture, it was no surprise how these new ideas spread like wild fire. From the nailing of Luther's Ninety-Five Theses to the doors of the church, to writings such as the Freedom of a Christian, Babylonian Captivity of the Church, and various letters directly to the Pope himself, Luther would challenge on basis of scripture religious leadership as well as many religious doctrines especially the practice of the sacraments and the sale of indulgences. His writings and ideas would draw in artists, musicians, governments, many other new theologians and as you can imagine, got Luther into quite a lot of trouble. In fact, he was thrown out of the church and excommunicated. The emperor sentenced him to death and put a price on his head, which in turn, led Luther to go into hiding. He went to a mountain top castle outside the city of Eisenach called Wartburg and there became very depressed. It was never his goal to start a movement leading to a new church. Luther wanted to reform within the Catholic Church, but with the way things were going, Luther felt like a failure. He was sure now that God had abandoned him, that he was right to feel unworthy of God's love.

It was there, once again where Luther encountered the light of Christ, pursuing him even into the darkest of corners in his life. He dove back into the Scriptures, now doing something that would change the world forever.

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Martin Luther translated the Bible from Latin into German. With this new work and with a restored confidence that God will never abandon those whom he has claimed in the waters of baptism, Luther left that mountaintop fortress to continue proclaiming Christ's saving and redeeming love. Eventually he would marry a woman who would share life and faith with him in this struggle of the reformation. Her name was Katharina Von Bora, an escaped nun seeking and being sought in the relentless love of God. As they grew together, Luther would keep writing and teaching eventually shaping the Small Catechism to teach the faith in our homes. All of it formed from scripture and was empowered by love. For Luther, all of life was life with God.

It is fascinating how this reforming movement in the church and society began with a man who felt unworthy of grace and salvation, yet relentlessly pursued by God's love. Our Lutheran heritage was formed by this pursuit grounded in the waters of baptism, united in the love of Jesus, and bonded in the promise of God's presence always.

So... why do I choose to be Lutheran?

Because we know that this life is often tragic and painful. Because we know that there are times we will feel like failures where sin will overpower us and we will wander or lose our way. We all need a God who loves us enough to pursue us and find us; Christ who will never let us go. Our life with God all began in the waters of baptism where Christ wrapped his arms around us and God said, "You are my child and I will lovingly pursue you wherever you go." This is most certainly true. And that is reason enough and grace enough for me... and I would imagine it is for you too!

Peace on the Journey
Pr. Chris

Bemidji Church Musicians



Bemidji Area Church Musicians' 2026 Summer Recital Series, now in their 39th season, will be at Calvary on Wednesday, July 29. This recital will feature Samantha Melberg playing flute, Sarah Leach playing piano, and Ben Bartholomew playing saxophone.

BACM's recitals are held each Wednesday through August 26 from 12:00-12:30pm, followed by a luncheon after each recital. Visit tinyurl.com/4u8v3pwy to view their entire schedule.

A Huge Thank YOU!

You are amazing, church! Our end of the year Stewardship Appeal has been a great success raising over \$27,000. Your response was amazing, and we saw participation again from all ages.

If you still have an envelope at home, please bring it in so we can officially close the appeal. Your gift makes such a difference in our life together, within these walls, and beyond them. You are a gift Calvary Lutheran Church, and it is a joy to walk together!

Pr. Chris and the Stewardship Ministry Team

Church Closed

Just a reminder that the building will be closed Friday, July 3 in observation of Independence Day. We hope everyone has a safe and fun weekend with family and friends.



Meals on Wheels



Our next opportunity to serve community members in need of meals will be July 20-24. Calvary needs volunteers to cover three routes, two people for each route from 10:00-12:00pm. We deliver the entire week, so opportunities exist for anywhere from one to all five days.

If you are interested in helping, contact Len Ochowicz at 320-364-3117. Meals are packed, ready for delivery, and can be picked up at the rear entrance of the Senior Center in Bemidji.

A special thank you to our church members as they stepped up to ensure that the Meals on Wheels program continues to assist those in need in our community. Your second ministry offerings are greatly appreciated!

Cemetery Care Team

We are looking to add to our group of cemetery caretakers. Calvary's cemetery care team cleans and mows the cemetery throughout spring, summer, and fall. They also occasionally help remove fallen trees after major June windstorms. If you would like to be a part of a group that helps our community's loved ones lay in rest in a clean and respectable cemetery, reach out to Garrett in the church office.

See Calvary's July Birthdays Here

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

See Calvary's August Birthdays Here

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

July Ministry Partner: Northwoods Caregivers



Our congregation and community include people of all ages. This month, our ministry partner is an organization that connects with and serves elders in our community. Northwoods Caregivers provides respite care, shopping help, transportation, and many other services for neighbors who can use this assistance. Calvary is a long-time supporter of the vital ministry, and we are proud to continue our partnership of service in the Bemidji area!

You can give to our monthly ministry partners through RebelGive or by check. If your writing a check, please make the check out to Calvary Lutheran, with the name of the mission partner written in the memo line.

Sunday School Coming Soon



As we rocket through the summer, we're planning another great year of Sunday school this fall. We'll continue to open with the Connections Worship for the whole family on Sunday mornings at 10:30 with Sunday school to follow. We share this faith-building time with kids preschool age through grade 5. Helpers of all ages are welcome, and we look forward to more awesome Bible stories, meaningful lessons, and inspirational music. Register now, at the link on our web page.

Bible Camp on a Boat

While we're on the houseboat with high school kids July 12-14, remember us in your prayers for a safe trip and a faithful experience. We appreciate the whole congregation's support of all the ministry that happens with Calvary youth. The houseboat experience meets the spiritual needs of youth in a stunning way as we spend a week in close quarters, almost no screen time, lots of conversations, singing, and care of creation and each other. It encapsulates the camp experience all at once. We look forward to you asking us all about it.

VBS Share Sunday

Join the entire Vacation Bible School crew, kids and helpers, on Sunday, August 9 at 9:00am for a celebration of Exploring the Nature of God in Rainforest Falls. We'll have great music and a sharing of the week's themes. Everyone is invited for this energetic conclusion to another amazing week of VBS at Calvary.

Annual Meeting

Join us on Sunday, August 2 for our annual meeting of the congregation. We will worship together at 9:00am and, following worship at 10:15am, we will gather for our annual meeting. At this meeting we will reflect on the ministry of the past year, celebrate our journey together, and look to what God has in store for our next year. We look forward to seeing you there!



Sanctuary Light Project

We are excited for our upcoming Sanctuary lighting project! Earlier this year, Calvary was the beneficiary of a trust that was designated for the revamping of the lights in the Sanctuary. This trust will cover the entire cost of the project! We will begin the process on Sunday, August 2 by removing sections of pews from the Sanctuary to make room for the project and will hold worship elsewhere until it's completed, which shouldn't last more than a couple weeks. We are incredibly grateful for this generous gift and are ready to let God's light shine during worship in a whole new way!

FINANCIAL REPORT 12 MONTH FISCAL YEAR – JULY-JUNE

General Fund – May

<u>Income</u>	<u>Budgeted</u>	<u>YTD Income</u>
\$107,684	\$105,869	\$1,138,832
<u>Expenses</u>	<u>Budgeted</u>	<u>YTD Expenses</u>
\$132,218	\$127,986	\$1,140,572

Cash, Receivables, & Savings:	\$152,520
May Ministry Partner: Peoples Church	\$3,188
Calvary Foundation Balance:	\$63,852

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

RebelGive
Connect Through Giving!

Call Jamie or Garrett for Help! 218-751-1893

A Message From Calvary Council ~ Special Meeting Recap:

Hello church family,

On June 14, we met as a congregation after worship to discuss a resolution to the question of selling a portion of our property. Proposed was a motion to sell the discussed adjacent land of about 17.5 acres (Eastern side of Calvary's property) to North Central Door by Garaga for a minimum of \$1,067,220. The discussion was both faithful and respectful as multiple opinions were shared, and in the end, we voted 88-12 in support of selling the discussed property. We are so thankful for all the engagement you have shown throughout this last year in this stewardship of land process, and we are excited to move forward with this sale and see what God has in store next. Take care and God's peace be with you!

Calvary Church Council

Preschool News

Preschool Garden



Calvary's Preschoolers planted in our new garden beds in June. Our garden will provide fresh produce for preschool snacks and teach our children a sense of caregiving and community. Thank you to everyone that donated to our Summer Garden Project!



No School

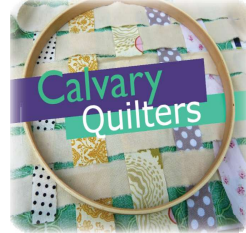
There will be no school Friday, July 3 in recognition of Independence Day.



Celebrate Summer Programming

The last day of summer programming is Friday, August 28. There will be an end of summer program at 3:00pm that day followed by an ice cream party to celebrate a fun summer together!

Calvary Quilters



Quilters will meet, Thursday, July 9 and Thursday, August 13 from 9:00-11:00am this summer. They will begin their weekly Thursday meetings again in September. If you would like to join them, reach out to Deb Bartz at 218-556-3708 or Nicki Lemmer at 218-766-6211.

Calvary Crafters July Activities

Calvary Crafters were sure busy in June. They created and delivered 2 knit baby blankets, 18 Chemo hats, 5 fleece blankets, and 1 prayer shawl. Nice work, ladies!

July Meeting Dates:

Sunday, July 12, Crafters serve coffee
Monday, July 13, 7:00pm at Cheryl's house
Monday, July 27, 10:00am at Church

If you would like to join us if your interested in knitting and crocheting items for church, community, and beyond you can call Cheryl Colford at 218-368-3098.

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 - Thursday July 9, August 13 from 9:00-11:00am

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)