



2508 Washington Ave SW
Bemidji, MN 56601

Reflections on Our Journey Together in Ministry

"Therefore, since we are surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses, let us also lay aside every weight and the sin that clings so closely, and let us run with perseverance the race that is set before us." – Hebrews 12:1

Greetings Dear Siblings in Christ. At our Annual Meeting this last summer I shared some reflections on our journey together in ministry, specifically in relation to the work and strategic initiatives laid out in the listening post from about 5 years ago. As we enter this fall in ministry together, I want to offer these reflections again for we are nearing a conclusion to this outstanding visioning work and looking toward a bright future together in ministry. First, what were these listening posts? This was a multi month process that sought to explore the needs of our congregation and community. From this process, three core areas were identified for visioning and growth with several objectives set forth. It was hoped that setting these areas as missional priorities would help bring vitality to Calvary. Let's reflect on them now.

Diversity of Worship: It was identified that Calvary values multiple expressions of worship, including both in-person and online options. Music was raised as a primary value within worship with a variety of musical styles, involvement opportunities, and service times offered. Core recommendations for growth included a more intentional diversification of worship experiences, cleaning up sound and technology issues, redesigning musical leadership and worship leadership, reestablishing a music and worship committee, and hiring a senior pastor with strengths in worship leadership and preaching. Over the last three years this has been a primary focus of mine, and I am excited to share that we have met all but one of these objectives with plans to meet the last one, musical leadership, this year. First, we currently have four unique and diverse offerings of worship that range from contemporary to traditional expressions of praise. Our average weekly worship attendance has grown from 288 in 2023 to 462 in 2026, a growth of about 60% in three years! We have seen most of this growth at Calvary Alive with our contemporary worship as well as on Sunday morning with our connections worship. Second, we have done a major overhaul to our sound output to both balance and provide a clearer and articulated sound quality. Managing sound quality is a challenging task with many variables and requires both between worship and during worship adaptations. Congregational feedback is helpful if something isn't working the way we intend. Third, our new worship and music ministry team began to meet this last year and has been an exciting team with whom to plan worship. Finally, Calvary indeed did call a pastor with a focus on worship ministry and moving into this year, we have a new goal to hire a full-time music director. When this is done, we will have achieved all the recommendations set forth in the area of worship at Calvary.

Faith Formation: The biggest area of feedback according to the listening posts was around faith formation. The church has and continues to have a great passion for children, youth, and family ministry, especially around faith formation. Core recommendations included the rebuilding of Children's ministry to include Sunday and Wednesday education opportunities, revisioning adult education opportunities and how they are promoted, hiring qualified staff to meet the needs of the first third of life including children's ministry, confirmation, and youth programming, to schedule family and small group opportunities for faith formation, and rebuilding connections with neighboring churches in our community as well as the synod and the ELCA. Over the last few years, several steps have been taken to achieve these recommendations including the hiring of a full-time faith formation director. This step has helped rebuild some of our relationships with our ministry partners including opportunities at Bible camp, with our synod, and other churches. Rebuilding children's ministry has held a primary focus as it serves as the foundation for all youth ministries. Building it up (or consequently not), affects the participation and connection of all ages that follow. The connections worship was designed with young families in mind as a space to worship and learn as a family, an opportunity to bridge preschool and Sunday school together, and to serve as a large group kickoff to Sunday school. It is the service that has seen the largest growth doubling to nearly 100 average participants in 3 years. Sunday school registrations have grown from under 17 in 2022 to over 70 in 2025. VBS has become a community program with over 120 kids this summer and our children's ministries have seen growth due to our preschool participation and the preschool has seen growth because of our Sunday school participation.

Continue Reflections on Our Journey Together in Ministry on page 2.

Cont'd Reflections on Our Journey Together in Ministry

The last two years have also seen family fun day opportunities. In terms of adult education, we have many bible study groups that meet regularly. Our adult education ministry team has also been exploring different forms of adult education, and currently it resides after worship on Wednesday nights. They are exploring other options as well and I am excited to see what Pr. Jeremiah and that team comes up with in the next year. Between Sunday morning and Wednesday night, we now have faith formation opportunities for all ages including adults.

Service to the Community: Another passion area for Calvary is putting our faith into action as love in service to others. A few recommendations were around creating stronger connections with our homebound through caregiving resources, exploring programs to organize volunteer opportunities, rebuilding our stewardship committee, and exploring the stewardship of our land with a plan for action. We believe that we are stronger in partnership with organizations that are positioned to do good work in our community, so one of the ministries we hold close to is our monthly ministry partner practice. Calvary has multiple service-based ministry teams, but these last couple years have also seen a few key new ministry teams develop. First was the stewardship ministry team to focus on cultivating a healthy culture of giving. Second was the caring friends ministry team with a focus on home visitation with holy communion with our elderly and homebound. Third was the formation of the outreach ministry team to bring back into our Church's mission faith in action opportunities. All of these teams are actively working now with new and exciting opportunities on the horizon. This last year we also explored the question of stewarding our resources of land and on June 14, 2026, we voted to sell a portion of our eastern property. These funds will be used to pay down our mortgage, update our current facilities, and invest in the future ministry that God has in store for our church. We continue to explore how to utilize the remainder of our land resources with many exciting ideas on the table.

These three areas have guided the missional priorities of the council along with financial stability and growth. I am excited that as we enter this four year of our life together, we have nearly completed all the objectives set forth in this great congregational listening work, recognizing that some have been adapted as we continue to evolve as a congregation. What's next? There is so much before us, from an opportunity to pay off our debt, to expanding our adult education opportunities, hiring a new full-time music professional, updating our custodial and building facilities, reaching out as love in action, and so much more. It is an amazing time to be Calvary, and I am so excited for the continued journey together. God is working, moving, and loving through you and our shared life. Let's run the race prepared for us!

Pastor Chris Leach
Lead Pastor of Calvary Lutheran Church

All Saints Worship

9:00AM, SUNDAY NOVEMBER 1, 2026

You are invited to join us for a time of remembering our loved ones who have gone to be in a nearer presence with God. We will offer prayers for all saints, toll the bells as we name loved ones lost in the last year, and celebrate their light by lighting candles in memory of them. All are welcome to share in this beautiful tradition. No need to bring anything special, just your presence and your love. If you have anyone specific you would like us to remember in the prayers, please provide that name to the office or to one of the pastors by October 25. We look forward to seeing you as we gather for All Saints Worship.

A Special Thanks for Rally Sunday

What an amazing morning it was to kick off the fall and life together as a church family. Rally Sunday is such a joyful morning to gather in worship, share a meal, and have some fun as we begin the new program year. A special thanks to the many hands and hearts that it takes to make it happen. Kathie and her team rocked the meal, church staff, council, and other volunteers set and cleaned up a welcoming and loving space for all to gather, and the praise team led a meaningful worship. It was a great morning to be church together and just the beginning of what is shaping up to be an awesome year. Thanks to all who made it come alive!

Preschool Closed

Calvary Preschool will be closed on Monday, October 5 for Staff Development and October 15 and 16 for MEA break.

Celebrating Gary Port!



wife Betty, and their family as we celebrate together.

You are invited to gather on October 4 during coffee fellowship hour at 10:00am as we celebrate Gary's work at Calvary as our daytime custodian. Gary has blessed our congregation through his service in this staff role and we want to bless him now with thanksgiving as he enters retirement. Let us wrap our joy, appreciation, and love around him, his

CLUB Meets on Wednesday

We meet on Wednesday nights at 7:15pm with all kids grades 9-12. It's a time for high school kids to gather again to consider some great faith questions, sing songs, play games, and wonder together about what God has in store for us. We meet every Wednesday and are excited to welcome the new class of 9th graders getting ready to be confirmed this fall. Bring your questions and your friends as we try not to laugh when we pray out loud.

See Calvary's October Birthdays Here

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

October's Ministry Partner: BSU/NWTC Lutheran Campus Ministry



One of Calvary's main ministry partners is Lutheran Campus Ministry (LCM) of Bemidji, housed in the Lutheran Campus Center at 1221 Birchmont Dr. NE, at the south end of BSU's campus. LCM is a vital outreach of our church, providing community for students and connecting with local churches in fellowship.

LCM is our October ministry partner - Please help us support this important ministry. You can donate using RebelGive, or by writing a check to Calvary Lutheran with "Lutheran Campus Ministry" in the memo line. Thank you again for supporting the work of the larger church through your generous donations!

Another Year of Serving Rolls STARTING SUNDAY, OCTOBER 11



Serve some rolls, make people happy and raise funds for summer trips. We count on middle and high school kids and families to work together for a couple hours the second Sunday of every month, now through May. We meet at 8:45am and hang out till 11:00am. All funds help kids experience summer trips from camp to mission trips to Adventure Serve to the Youth Gathering. Let Brett know if you have a hankering to do some roll serving this year.

Save the Date: NOVEMBER 1 IS FAMILY FUN DAY

Plan on joining the fun on Sunday, November 1 for another Family Fun Day from 11:30am-1:00pm at church. More details to come, but plan on food, games, activities, open gym and excellent family time. Mark your calendar and plan on attending.

Sunday School is All About Family Connections



Join us any time for Sunday School when families connect in worship at 10:30am in the sanctuary. Families (children and a responsible adult) learn the same Bible story together before kids head off to age-level classrooms. Kids in preschool through 5th grade are invited to participate. Use the QR code to register or find the link on our web page. Or, if Wednesday is your night, be part of Sunday School on Wednesday at 7:15pm following the Calvary Alive meal and worship. Talk to Brett if you have any questions.

3rd Grade Bibles on Sunday, October 25

It's Bible time again, and we're ready to celebrate this important faith milestone with our Calvary kids on Sunday, October 25 at the 10:30am Connections Worship.

We want every child to have a complete NRSV Spark Bible that they can begin to read on their own. We celebrate this milestone in Grade 3, but older children who have missed the chance to receive a Bible in the past, can receive a Spark Bible at this service, if you let us know ahead of time. It's all part of the promises made in baptism and a great way to inspire faith talk around the house.

Parents, godparents, family, and friends are welcome to celebrate this important part of the faith formation of our kids. It's all part of the service on October 25 at 10:30am.

If you would like your child to receive a Bible, please contact Brett Carter, at 218-751-8053 or bcarter@calvarybemidji.org.

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 from 9:00-11:00am
Choir - Every Thursday from 5:30-6:30pm

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)

Calvary Preschool Thanks You

I want to extend a big thank you to everyone that has donated to the Calvary Lutheran Preschool Scholarship Fund! This fund helps families throughout the year that are struggling to pay for tuition. Through generous financial support we have been able to award scholarships to many families throughout the years and help them feel welcomed into our preschool program. We know not all families seek this kind of support, but we can help answer some prayers by making this support available.

Donations can be made by check or online through RebelGive with "preschool scholarship" in the memo line at any time. On behalf of our families, thank you!

Ashley Holmgren - Director of Preschool Ministry

FINANCIAL REPORT 12 MONTH FISCAL YEAR – JULY-JUNE

General Fund – August

<u>Income</u>	<u>Budgeted</u>	<u>YTD Income</u>
\$85,571	\$113,270	\$158,951
<u>Expenses</u>	<u>Budgeted</u>	<u>YTD Expenses</u>
\$108,355	\$94,610	\$201,074

Cash, Receivables, & Savings: \$88,446

Aug. Ministry Partner: Lutheran Disaster Relief \$1,490

Calvary Foundation Balance: \$64,840

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

A Message From Calvary Council ~ Chris Anderson



Welcome back Calvary!

Gathering to worship, connecting with Jesus, and serving our neighbors.

From the "RALLYSUNDAY" cheers from families as they pull into the lot. Golf cart rides from the back of the parking lot. Dew on your feet, while you help those older than you set out their chairs in the perfect spot. Meaningful conversations with families you don't know. Prayers and Thanksgiving moments. Turning up the volume on the sound system for all to hear our praise band worship and rock! Kids racing to be the first into the bounce houses but being kind and helping each other in and out. The sounds of laughter and comradery of friends catching up after a busy summer away. The smell of great food prepared with love and care by so many! To the "I don't want to go yet" from the kids as parents wrangle them to leave. Rally Sunday IS Calvary's mission statement. Thank you to all who came and worshiped! Thank you to all who played a role in making this such an amazing start to another church year! And thank you Jesus, for the beautiful day!

As we start to settle into our new year, kick off Sunday School and welcome all the littles back to the preschool, we have so much to be thankful for and excited about! Take a look around! Check out the amazing glow our sanctuary has from the new lights! What a beautiful gift! Be sure to say hello to John, our new custodian as he roams our halls. As you drop off and pick your kiddos up from preschool, check out their newly added room 12 and say hello to all the new staff members over there as well! With a growing preschool and Sunday School is a growing future! For all these things we are thankful and excited!

Other things to be thankful for and be excited about. For our seniors, the fall leaf trip! For our school aged kids, the new afterschool program! The Stewardship of Land, the pending sale of our property and all the endless opportunities it opens up for our church and its families!

Don't forget to thank Gary for his many years of steadfast service to our great church. Pray for him and wish him well as he officially moves into retirement.

If you are feeling called to serve, try something new, or just want to help out, please reach out to any of your council members or Calvary staff! We are always looking for communion assistance and ushers at each service!

Chris Anderson - Vice President, Church Council

Beer and Hymns

Where: Bemidji Brewing

When: October 25th from 5:00pm–7:00pm

Who: All Are Welcome

What: Do you like singing hymns and enjoying a brew with friends? Join us for Beer and Hymns at Bemidji Brewing. We will gather together with some of our other local church friends to host a night at the brewery full of laughter, fellowship, and singing. Grab a pint of your favorite beverage (alcoholic and nonalcoholic options are available) while we gather at 5:00pm for a social hour. Bring your own supper if you like or enjoy the provided snacks. Singing starts at 6:00pm and should be a wonderful time of joy and celebration. All are welcome as we cheers the joy of life in the Spirit. Just remember, the beer is optional, but the singing is not.

Confirmation Stoles for 9th Graders

Attention 9th grade confirmation students. We're making stoles again this year in preparation for Confirmation Sunday on October 25. Pastor Chris and Brett Carter, Director of Faith Formation, will lead 9th graders through two special Wednesday Stole-making nights October 7 and 21 at 7:15pm (after worship) in the youth room.

We'll spend time imagining a life of faith following confirmation and creating a memorable stole (like the colorful ones pastors wear in worship). A stole represents the "yoke of Christ," signifying the person's role as a servant and leader in the church. We'll make red stoles to wear during the confirmation service. We'll also meet the CLUB group and share stories about living a life of faith in high school.

All this strengthens the milestone experience of confirmation leading to an ongoing life of faith and as we celebrate confirmation together on Sunday, October 25. Any questions, talk to the pastors or Brett.

Confirmation Worship: SUNDAY, OCTOBER 25 AT 2:00PM!

Come and celebrate our 9th grade confirmation class as they affirm their faith on October 25! Let's gather as a church family to witness this milestone together. This is an additional worship service that Sunday, held at 2:00pm. Confirmands are asked to be present in the sanctuary at noon for rehearsal and a class picture.

Did You Know?

Unless asked, hospitals don't alert pastors when their congregation members are admitted. If you would like Pastor Chris or Pastor 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!

