



# Journal

**Mount Calvary  
Lutheran Church  
& Learning Center  
688 Dakota Ave S  
Huron, SD 57350**

"Mt. Calvary: Where New Life Begins"

December 2023

## The End is Better than the Beginning

By Rev. Kevin Koester, Associate Pastor

Dear members and friends of Mt. Calvary,

Greetings in the name of Jesus Christ, our Savior! I pray that our Lord would grant you an extra measure of patience, hope, charity, and love as you serve Him this month. By the time you read this article, some of our fellow congregations in the LCMS will have already started their Advent preparations. They will have four Wednesday Advent services, while we will only have three. Because of the way everything falls, this year, the 4th Sunday in Advent will be Christmas Eve. They may have one more evening with their bellies full of good Advent supper food, but do not fret. By deciding to have three Wednesday Advent services instead of four, we are getting an advanced lesson in what this season is all about. And we are also learning that the end is better than the beginning.

A couple of weeks ago, I needed a lesson in a lot of different things. It had been a hectic week and for me, it looked like things weren't going to get done. On Friday, there were phone calls that I didn't expect. There were people in the Church building that I didn't expect. There were things that I had to do that I didn't expect. But I had thought it would be a nice quiet Friday where I could put the finishing touches on my sermon for the week.

It all started with a phone call to the Church Office. As I was typing furiously, Lorna called from her office to say there was somebody on hold for me. She said his name, but it didn't register. I asked "did he say where he was from?" But there was no clarification until I picked up the phone. It was an old friend from Concordia St. Paul. He had gone to school to be a Lutheran Classroom Teacher and we had been in a Bible study together with several other guys during my time there. He now works as a fuel truck driver and happened to be in town. Only problem was, he couldn't get himself to Church with his truck. I would need to pick him up early on Sunday morning.

My first thought was "I don't really have time for this," but it was such a blessing to have him here. He dutifully sat through my sermon and my Bible study and came up afterward to say, "It was so great to see you doing your thing. They're blessed to have you." The end was better than the beginning.

On that same Friday, I had an unexpected visitor. After the first phone call, I was a bit annoyed. People keep coming to our door and I have to tell them "I'm sorry, we can't do much to help you." I walked out of my office in a huff and went to the Fellowship Hall where she was sitting. She looked vaguely familiar, but I could not remember where I had seen her before. She said "I remember you. You're Pastor Kevin, right? You helped me about a year ago." A year ago, she was in a bad situation. She was pregnant with no working vehicle. I would like to say that she was happily married with a devoted husband, but this was an unplanned pregnancy involving deception and a very sad set of circumstances. We had convinced her to spare the child's life, but now, she was coming to me with a different problem. Her car had started on fire near Virgil Road. Somebody had volunteered their vehicle to tow it, but they needed gas. We got her set up with a gas card, but as she was telling me the story, she broke down in tears. She said "I'm trying. I'm really trying. I don't do drugs. I don't drink. I'm trying to hold down a job, but things like this keep happening." I immediately felt ashamed that I had been so dismissive of her at first. Then, she said "Things can only get better from here, right?" And then she showed me pictures of her 1-year old son. The end was better than the beginning.

Even before that Friday morning, my heart had been heavy. Not heavy in the sense of sadness, but heavy in the sense of bursting at the seams with various emotions. I get to minister to children on a regular basis, whether through our preschool or on Sunday mornings during services or during the week in

*(continued on page 2)*





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Family Ministry. I don't often get to minister to them when they are in the hospital. I thank God that I don't have to do that very often, actually. Children are very often resilient, bouncing back quickly from broken bones and accidents and other things like that. But it's a lot harder when you have to say "this is going to be with you for a long, long time." It's a hard concept to understand, for someone so young. They've only been around for about a decade or even less, in some cases. To them, each moment seems a lot longer, because this is new. Or at least, their experience with it is relatively new. In those moments, you can sugar coat it or you can try introducing a concept that many adults don't even get. God uses suffering. God works through you as a person. God brings glory out of our experience, if we handle it with endurance and patience.

My heart absolutely melted when her mom said this young lady wanted to see me. She smiled as my name was brought up and wanted me to come down and help her through this. One of mom's favorite passages that I shared throughout the week was Lamentations 3:25-26, which says *"The Lord is good to those who wait for him, to the soul who seeks him. It is good that one should wait quietly for the salvation of the Lord."* I sent those verses on one of the days I wasn't at the hospital and on another day, when I was there, I saw that she was getting frustrated. I repeated my plea for her to have patience. Eventually, her patience was rewarded. She was absolutely

beaming as she came to worship the next Sunday. The end was better than the beginning.

As we know, Advent is all about waiting and our waiting seems to be satisfied by the coming of Christ, the baby in the manger. But really, our waiting is not completely satisfied on December 25th. As we start the new church year in Advent, we still have yet to hear about the full extent of what this Christ would do. I once heard another pastor say that every Christmas, he could preach an Easter sermon, and every Easter, he could preach a Christmas sermon. Although I think people would revolt, he might have a point. They go together. And if we had to rank Christmas and Easter, the end is actually better than the beginning. Yes, Christ comes as the prophets foretold, but that is "only" the first part of the message. Christ would come to die. Christ would come to rise from the dead. Christ would come to return in glory. If we think about it, the end of earthly life for a believer actually results in the beginning of something else, eternal life. Once we have entered into heaven, there will be no more beginnings and no more ends. Infinite glory, infinite majesty, and infinite joy is what will result. Our God will wipe every tear from our eyes. Death will be no more. We will praise the Lamb Who was sent, the Lamb Who was slain, and the Lamb Who reigns now forever and ever.

In Christ, Pastor Kevin

## MIDWEEK ADVENT SERIES

Beginning on Wednesday evening, December 6, and for the following two Wednesdays, our Midweek Advent Services will be using the theme "Our Advent Journey." We will be looking at three towns or cities that served major roles in the coming, or "advent", of our Savior Jesus, as well as some of the people who also were most important in the story of Jesus' birth and ministry.

Beginning with the once insignificant village of Nazareth in Galilee, we will travel to Judea and the historic and important city of Jerusalem, and then conclude in the small town of Bethlehem, the "City of David."

Please be sure to set aside time this Advent Season and join us on this special "journey."





## "Our Advent Journey"

**Sunday, Dec. 3 is the first Sunday of Advent**

**Wednesday, Dec. 6**

6:00 p.m. Supper—Soups served by LWML

6:45 p.m. Hymn Sing

7:00 p.m. **Midweek Worship Service—Nazareth**

**Sunday, Dec. 10 is the second Sunday of Advent**

**Wednesday, Dec. 13**

6:00 p.m. Supper—hosted by the Elders

6:45 p.m. Hymn Sing

7:00 p.m. **Midweek Worship Service—Jerusalem**

**Sunday, Dec. 17 is the third Sunday of Advent**

**Wednesday, Dec. 20**

6:00 p.m. Supper—hosted by the Youth

6:45 p.m. Hymn Sing

7:00 p.m. **Midweek Worship Service—Bethlehem**



### CHRISTMAS POINSETTIAS

Donations are now being received for poinsettias to decorate the altar and chancel area in celebration of Jesus' birth. Please mail your donation to the church or put it in an envelope marked "Poinsettia Fund" and place it in the offering plate. Checks may be made payable to LWML.

If you would like to take a poinsettia plant home after the Christmas services please note that with your donation.

If you would like to donate in memory of a loved one, please write the name(s) on your "Poinsettia Fund" envelope or include a note.

To the Mount Calvary Congregation:

I want to thank you for supporting me for the past three years and allowing me to be able to attend Concordia Texas University. Your donations have made it possible for me to go to my dream school. Being able to attend Concordia has been like me being able to attend Harvard. I made a best friend while attending Concordia. Her name is Claudia Wilbur. She hopes to visit me when she gets the funds available. We talk every two weeks for about 40 minutes at a time.

On Ash Wednesday last year, the rapper Flame performed at Chapel, which was broadcast over YouTube. I watched this on Concordia's YouTube page and this meant so much to me because I rarely get to see concerts because of my disability. It was blizzard-ing here that day. I wish there was a way I could think of for doing that in person, and for him to sign his memoir that I own a copy of.

You have given me a sense of spiritual completeness because of these life-changing opportunities through your donations. I will be eternally grateful to all of you.

Sincerely, Blaine Liebnow







## HARVEST FESTIVAL

### Mt. Calvary Learning Center Fall Harvest Festival & Auction

**Sunday, December 3, 2023  
at 4:00 p.m.**

Our Learning Center Fall Festival is fast approaching, the afternoon preschool class is bursting with song (and actions) as the kids prepare for their big night in the "Spotlight"!

Please join us for our singing program, which will begin at 4:00 p.m. with the meal and auction to follow. Our program, meal and auction will be held in the Activity Center again this year.

Our meal will be a "free will offering" with our menu consisting of walking tacos, cookie, and a drink.

### Our auction will be 100% live this year.

The Learning Center Board, teachers, and students deeply appreciate everything that our congregation and its members have done and continues to do to help make our Learning Center successful!!! Without God's grace and blessing and your help/donations we would not be able to continue our mission work of teaching children of so many families about God.



Jesus said, "Let the little children come to me, do not stop them; for the Kingdom of Heaven belongs to them." Mark 10:14



### All Congregational Officers

A reminder to have the annual recaps for your boards written and submitted to the church office no later than December 29th to allow time for the Annual Report to be printed prior to the Voter's Assembly in January.

In October sixty filled boxes were delivered to the Orphan Grain Train warehouse in Milbank SD. From there they can be shipped on to areas of need in the U.S. and other countries.

Thank you Mt. Calvary for bringing your gently used clothing donations to the church. We thank you for the clothing and for monetary gifts to support these humanitarian efforts.



Relief for Human Need Worldwide

## Thank You



Nathan Dick  
39649 209th St  
Huron SD 57350

Robbie Gascoigne  
1106 Poplar St  
Monticello IL 61856

Amy Hall  
4917 S Graystone Ave Unit 12  
Sioux Falls SD 57108

Eric Hall  
4917 S Graystone Ave Unit 12  
Sioux Falls SD 57108

Lisa Meyer  
2260 Wisconsin Ave SW  
Huron SD 57350

James Tapken  
6627 East Decatur Street  
Mesa AZ 85205

Robert and Marlett Snoozy  
1117 W 6th Ave  
Mitchell SD 57301  
have transferred to  
Zion Lutheran Church,  
Mitchell, South Dakota

## FAREWELL & Godspeed

### Boxed Christmas Cards Available

Christmas cards have been added to the card rack in the Fellowship Hall. Card sales are a fundraiser to support LWML. Check it out!





## Children — Youth — Family Ministry at Mt. Calvary Lutheran Church



We appreciate all of you that braved the cold on Sunday, October 29th to participate in Trunk or Treat! Another opportunity to share our faith with the community!

It was a great success, with wonderfully costumed children and adults, creatively decorated cars, and we thank everyone that donated candy.







## Children — Youth — Family Ministry at Mt. Calvary Lutheran Church



On October 29th during Sunday school the children made braided jump ropes from strips of t-shirts to be included in the shoe boxes. Thanks to everyone that donated t-shirts, and helped make the jump ropes. (photos at top and to left)

A packing party to pack the shoebox gifts for Operation Christmas Child was held on Sunday, November 5th following the 10:30 service. There was plenty of pizza and pop for lunch before packing 44 shoe boxes! Thank you to all those who participated in the packing party and helped with cleaning up. (see photos below)

The Board of Education would also like to thank everyone who contributed to the door offerings for postage and to help cover the cost of buying gift items for the Operation Christmas Child shoe boxes. We appreciate the congregation's generous donations of items to pack in the shoe boxes and look forward to packing even more next year!



*"Let the little children come to me and do not hinder them, for to such belongs the kingdom of heaven." Matthew 19:14*





## Children — Youth — Family Ministry at Mt. Calvary Lutheran Church



### Sunday, December 10th—Caroling to shut ins

If you would like to participate, please stay after the 10:30 service on December 10th.

When we meet, we will have some refreshments, receive our music, and then go out in groups.

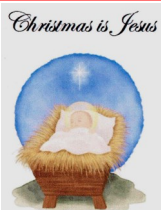
All voices are welcome to join in!



### Sunday, December 17—First Communion

During the 8:00 a.m. worship service Family Ministry students who attended the Lord's Supper classes and successfully completed the test may start receiving Communion.

The Rite of First Communion liturgy will be held first so those students may receive their First Communion together and afterward the rest of congregation will receive Communion.



### Sunday, December 17th—The Sunday School Christmas Program During the 10:30 a.m. worship service.

A lunch of barbecues and hotdogs, chips, and milk will be served following the service. Families are asked to bring cookies to share.



### Wednesdays in December—Kids for Christ

Meets from 5:15-6:15 p.m. for Kindergarten through fifth grade students.

No class on Wednesday, December 27th due to the Christmas Holiday break.

## FAMILY MINISTRY NEWS

In the month of December, students in the 8th grade and above class should watch for worksheets to be posted to the Family Ministry page. These worksheets will help you to review the Ten Commandments and prepare for the test. The 8th grade and above class will meet in-person again on January 10th. The 6th and 7th grade class will also have one more class with Roger Kropuenske on January 10th. Please refer to the Family Ministry Calendar for further schedule details.



**Marty Party was November 19th**

Dear Mt. Calvary members,

So, So many thanks to all who helped in any way at our Marty Party! The potluck was delicious, the skit with our honored guests Martin and Katie, (Daryl Haeder and Sara Newman) was outstanding and ALL the folks who helped with, and at, the party stations are rockstars!! This event was truly a group effort and I appreciate you all!!!

My thanks, Karla Sawvell



*"Let the children come to me; do not hinder them, for to such belongs the kingdom of God." Mark 10:14*



Mt. Calvary Lutheran Church  
and Learning Center

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## Christmas — New Year's Eve Worship Schedules

### Sunday, December 17

10:30 a.m. **Sunday School Program**  
**With Meal to Follow**

### Sunday, December 24 — Christmas Eve

9:30 a.m. **Worship Service**  
3:30 p.m. **Candle Light Service**  
(In-Person/Livestreamed)  
5:30 p.m. **Candle Light Service**  
(In-Person/Livestreamed)

### Monday, December 25 — Christmas Day

9:30 a.m. **Worship Service with Communion**  
(In-Person/Livestreamed)

### Sunday, December 31 — New Year's Eve

8:00 a.m. **Worship Service with Communion**  
(In-Person/Livestreamed)  
10:30 a.m. **Worship Service with Communion**  
(In-Person/Livestreamed)  
7:00 p.m. **Worship Service with Communion**  
(In-Person/Livestreamed)

