

CHRISTMAS  
AT CALVARY

PRESENT  
OVER PERFECT

SMALL GROUP  
CONNECTION



# Light of the World



# CQ

CALVARY LUTHERAN CHURCH  
QUARTERLY MAGAZINE



CALVARY  
LUTHERAN  
*Church*

WINTER 2017-2018  
DECEMBER, JANUARY, FEBRUARY

# FROM PASTOR HANS

Dear friends in faith,

This time of year, we love light, don't we? The lights that decorate Broadway bring smiles to our faces. The lights on our Christmas trees and homes bring a magical joy this time of year. We light candles that bring a warmth we crave during these dark and cold winter months.

And, I suppose, it's not just during these winter months that we crave light, joy, hope and warmth. Over this past year, I've found myself wanting a little more light...because there is more than enough darkness out there, isn't there? We turn on our televisions, pull up the news or turn on the radio, and all we seem to hear is a constant stream of stories that seem so dark — hurricanes, flooding and fires, mean-spirited and shady politics. Tensions between nations and the racial divide. In our own lives, we know broken relationships, cancer diagnosis, addiction, financial strains and we regularly wonder if this rat race of life is all there is. We crave stories of light, don't we?

Well, here's the deal: The story of Jesus breaking into this world on Christmas is a story of light for all the world! The author of the book of John described Jesus' birth this way — he said, "The light shines in the darkness and **the darkness will never overcome it!**" Some 2,000 years ago when Jesus was born, the world was far darker than our world today. Rome ruled with an iron fist. People lived in constant fear. It was a brutal life of darkness. But, that's the world God chose to break into, bringing a story of hope and joy and peace and love — Jesus came as the "Light of the World" and promises the same for you and me today!

Inside this issue of the CQ, you'll find stories of light. Stories of how friends of Calvary are shining God's light in their everyday lives. Folks, each and every day I pray that we, Calvary, would be known as that church that's constantly reflecting God's light boldly and brightly for all to see in our community and beyond. And, that by that light — through our worshiping, connecting and serving together — more and more people would be led to a lifelong faith in Jesus Christ.

Friends, I wish you a Christmas filled with light — the light that only comes from the light of the world!

Peace and joy!



Pastor Hans

## WINTER 2017

Calvary Lutheran Church  
605 Douglas Street  
Alexandria, MN 56308  
320-763-5178

## THIS ISSUE

From Pastor Hans  
Christmas at Calvary  
Light Shines  
Nadia Bolz-Weber  
Sydney Christenson  
Present Over Perfect  
Connect Groups  
Jr LEAPP FROGS  
Chap Clark  
God's Light at Work  
LWR School Kits  
Caring Ministries  
Ristvedt Family  
Building Team

# Light of the World

## Christmas Worship Series: November 26 – December 24

Christmas is the most wonderful time of the year, right? Then why doesn't it always feel that way? It's a season filled with grand expectations we will never meet, people we love whom we can't control, and problems arise that we'll never solve. Consider this: Christmas is not the most wonderful time of the year because of what's happening, but because of what happened. It's not wonderful because of who is with us, but because of who is for us. It's about Jesus — who comes as light that overcomes all the darkness we face — that's what makes this the most wonderful time of the year!

## PASTOR & PROGRAM STAFF INFORMATION PHONE: 320-763-5178

Pastor Hans Dahl  
hans@calvaryalex.org

Pastor Nathan Thompson  
nathan@calvaryalex.org

Katie Christensen  
katie@calvaryalex.org

Katie Dahl  
katie.dahl@calvaryalex.org

Katie Rentschler  
katie.r@calvaryalex.org

Jennie Hodgson  
jennie@calvaryalex.org

Natalie Hanson  
natalie@calvaryalex.org

Jessica Paulsen  
jess@calvaryalex.org

Paige Good  
paige@calvaryalex.org

# Celebrate Christmas

at Calvary

## LIGHT OF THE WORLD WORSHIP SERIES: NOVEMBER 26 - DECEMBER 24

Jesus comes as light that overcomes all the darkness we face — that's what makes this the most wonderful time of the year!

## CHRISTMAS EVE WORSHIP

**Celebrate the birth of the "Light of the World" — Jesus Christ!  
Invite family, a friend or neighbor to Christmas Eve Worship.**

**Saturday, December 23**

6:00pm Christmas Eve (Eve) Contemporary

**Sunday, December 24**

11:00am Christmas Eve Family Worship

1:00pm Christmas Eve Contemporary Worship

3:00pm Christmas Eve Contemporary Worship

5:00pm Christmas Eve Traditional Worship

7:00pm Christmas Eve Traditional Worship

*\*All services include Candlelight and Communion*



# Light Shines In Unexpected Ways

At Calvary, people are boldly and brightly reflecting God's light every day — in big and small ways. Although the work of these people is done quietly, behind the scenes, it makes a strong impact both within the church and the community.



EMMA  
HOCHHALTER

"Last February I had a party for my half-birthday because we didn't celebrate in August, and I got a whole bunch of presents. My mom has always told me I have too many things in my bedroom and should do something different for a party. For my 13th birthday this August, I decided to ask everyone to bring two pairs of socks for Socks for Souls at church (Love INC). My friends loved this idea and told me that I was doing something really cool. It felt really amazing doing this!"

MONICA  
PETERSON



*\*Monica (on left) pictured with Melissa Winter*

"Service at church isn't just the visible aspects, sometimes it's behind the scenes. No one really knows how Wednesday meals get done each week, but every person coming through the line truly appreciates what is being served. That keeps me going; the weekly "thank you!" and "my kids are SO excited for Wednesday meals." Plus, this provides another opportunity for my entire family to serve Calvary."



LUCAS  
KOSTERS

"I am currently the Dean of Students at Alexandria Area High School. Faith is lived out in my work by my daily interactions with students and staff. My faith gives me strength to handle difficult issues with dignity. I model a positive, loving approach to all situations and build relationships to grow a connected community within our school."



(Photo by Karen Tolkkinen / Echo Press)

## Faith For Life Speaker

### NADIA BOLZ-WEBER

Nadia Bolz-Weber, founding pastor of House for All Sinners and Saints in Denver, Colorado, came to Alexandria on November 1, as part of our Faith For Life Speaker Series. With over 900 in attendance at the Alexandria Area High School Performing Arts Center, she spoke to a nearly full house delivering a powerful message focused on the need for grace.

## Musician Profile

### SYDNEY CHRISTENSON

Hi, I am Sydney Christenson! I'm a junior at Alexandria Area High School and am currently in Concert Choir, Carolers, Tuck Everlasting (fall musical) and jazz band. Music has always been a huge part of my life.

I took piano lessons in elementary school then began to take drum/bass/guitar lessons from Dave Parsch, who is a fantastic teacher at Carlson music. Initially, Dave was the one who got me into playing with the band at Calvary, and I've kept coming back ever since! The band at Calvary has a very upbeat vibe, and it is always fun to get together with talented musicians. It's also a great way for me to practice. I may not have one specific memory that I remember best about playing with the band, but being able to see the improvements I have made over the course of two years is absolutely amazing.



Present  
— OVER —  
PERFECT

January Worship Series

Doesn't it seem we've become addicted to lives filled with constant running – pushing to give our families and ourselves that picture perfect life? Though we long for connection, meaning and depth, we settle for busy – because we've been told that this is what makes for the good life.

Join us for this new worship series where you will be invited to consider a new way to live. A way marked more by grace, love, rest and play than exhaustion and isolation. It's the life we believe God created you to live.



# Sharing The Light

## CONFIRMATION GROUP

Participating in the Wednesday night parent Connect Groups has been a fabulous way to meet new people and discuss topics relevant to all parents and our children. We have been able to explore concepts presented during the service as well as topics discussed by our kids in their own small groups. I personally have found the parent group time a wonderful experience as it has provided a way to get to know a group of adults at Calvary that I had not known well before. In a world of 'digital connectedness' and busy lives, I feel that having this dedicated parent time has allowed me to connect in a meaningful way with other adults. I have found this time invaluable and look forward to getting to know my group members more as the year goes on.

AMY D.



## FAMILY GROUP

Saying yes to leading a Connect Group was an easy decision for us. Together we value relationships and intentionality so it seemed like the perfect opportunity to come together with like-minded folks. Geographically the couples in our group live within a few miles of one another. The kids love their weekly time together and have even coined their name, "Kids Connect Group." We meet over dinner on Sunday nights with adults at one house and kids at another, and each family pitches in to provide food and pay the babysitters. We've found this time of gathering with other parents who share many of the same experiences to be invaluable. Having the opportunity to grow deeper with people who encourage, challenge, and stretch us is something we've longed for.

JESS AND NOLAN KRIEL

*Families: Zabel, Hodgson, Kriel, Lee, Anderson, and Dahl*





# In Connect Groups!

## MOM GROUP

A few months ago I started a Connect Group. I felt responsible for how well it went, and I desperately tried to remind myself, “God, it is all in your hands.” They showed up, we introduced ourselves, got talking, and by prayer requests at the end of our time together, we were all in tears, walking alongside one another as we shared our struggles, and concerns for our kids, families, pregnancies, etc. We have grown closer to God and closer to each other, and it continues to be one of the most soul satisfying experiences in my life. Without pushing through the nerves of those first steps into a Connect Group, I know my faith would not be what it is today.

HEATHER GOOD

*Heather Good, Alicia Bertram, Nicole Momsen, Tabitha Kremmin.*

*Not pictured: Kristin Ostlund, Samantha Anderson, & Kristi Breitling.*



## RE-CONNECT GROUP

Our Connect Group is kind of a Re-Connect Group. We’ve dubbed our meetings “Sunday Soup & Soul.” We have all been part of a dinner club together for a number years as we all came to Alexandria about the same time twenty plus years ago. We would gather almost monthly for dinners with each other. As our children grew and became more active in school activities, our gatherings waned a bit. We are using this opportunity to reconnect, and Calvary has deepened and maintained those connections.

JAY SIELING AND DEBBIE DITTBERNER

*Mark & Carmon Watkins; Tom & Joni Jacobson; Linda Anderson; Jay Sieling & Debbie Dittberner.*

*Not pictured: Rich & Janelle Sundberg; Todd Anderson; Chris & Nanette Haugen.*



# Students Shining Light



## JR. LEAPP FROGS

"The Jr Leapp Frog program has given my son the confidence to be a leader. He's learning to jump in and help in situations that he previously wouldn't have at church, home and school."

RENAE CHRISTENSON

"Jackson's really stepped up as a leader with his sister lately encouraging them to start homework right away "without mom knowing." He's not my school kid—meaning homework used to be far from his mind. I love seeing him be such a great role model for his little sister. It strengthens their bond."

ALICIA BERTRAM



"Mason loves helping with the service projects and with the younger children at church. He enjoys learning how he can use the gifts he has to be a good leader."

STEPH HUEBNER

"My Son is so eager and takes becoming a true leader so seriously! I have heard him telling our extended family members about what he is learning with great pride and it's just beginning!"

BROOKE ZABEL



## FAITH FOR LIFE SPEAKER

Chap Clark will be at Calvary, February 21, at 6:00pm

Chap Clark is professor of Youth, Family, and Culture at Fuller Seminary, President of ParenTeen, Inc., and co-interim preaching pastor at St Andrews Presbyterian Church in Newport Beach, CA.

This Faith For Life Speaker event is focused on what it means to see parenting as stewardship from God. The focus will be on how God is calling parents to respond to their children in a highly secular and fragmented culture, what biblical discipleship looks like during the teen years, and how parents who have an authentic faith have the best chance of leading their children into a lifetime of commitment to God and his kingdom work.



# Spreading God's Light At Work



*(Dave Solheim pictured with Sister Agatha)*

## DAVE SOLHEIM

I have experienced faith in action through my work as a Physical Therapist. For the past 25 years, in addition to my regular job, I also drive twice a month to provide therapy to the Sisters at the Order of Saint Benedict in St. Joseph, MN. No matter what job I have held, this time with the Sisters has been a priority for me. They are very genuine in their faith and interactions yet are also fun loving.

For many of the Sisters, I am their first medical adviser. They trust me, and I can provide beneficial treatment and help them learn to treat themselves. They confess if they have not been faithful to the exercises, even though I am far from a priest! This “work” has been very enriching over the years, and we provide each other friendship, knowledge and laughter. Some of the Sisters call me GOD but that just stands for Good Old Dave.



## KENDALL BRICKWEG

In 2011, I graduated with a degree in Communication Art and Design. Shortly after, I started to wonder how this degree was going to help me serve a purpose. In 2015 I was working at a job that I loved but still didn't feel like I was serving a purpose. By a fluke I applied for a job at our local United Way, but was feeling conflicted about even interviewing when I was comfortable and happy where I was. A few days before my interview we were at church, and Pastor Hans started the service by introducing us to a washing machine agitator. The sermon was about how God works to pull you in different directions—he even mentioned the scenario of being happy at your job but feeling called to take a different one. I looked over at my husband and we both knew that I would be starting a new job very shortly.

In May of 2015 I started working for United Way of Douglas and Pope Counties as the Marketing and

Communications Coordinator. Through this job I feel I am finally serving my purpose. God put an agitator in my life, calling me to help make a difference in our community though the team at United Way.

# Light Around The World



## LWR SCHOOL KITS

Regardless of how long you've been around Calvary, you have likely noticed that our church's commitment to service stretches from local to global projects. This fall, Calvary people of all ages helped gather supplies to pack nearly 800 Lutheran World Relief school kits, sent around the world to children who wouldn't otherwise have them. What started during VBS, continued with Sunday School, Mission Kit packing day, and ConfirMission, bringing many hands together to collect things like pencils, rulers, and scissors. And behind the scenes, constantly buying, counting, and organizing the hundreds of supplies is a woman who has had her pulse on this and other mission projects for years—Mary Oberg.

When Mary moved back to Alexandria more than 20 years ago, she was fresh off work in the restaurant business that had taken her from Cleveland to West Palm Beach. Mary's job as a food buyer taught her the great skill of comparison shopping. Now, as a key volunteer for mission kit projects at Calvary, Mary has continued honing this skill. You'll find her asking managers at Target for cases of notebooks in the fall, at Ron's Warehouse once a week scoping out sales, and at Someplace Safe on Tuesdays when you can fill a purple bag for only \$10—her record is 93 baby items in one bag.

But Mary knows it's more than just the deal that matters. It's the community of others who come together with her during the year to make a difference in the lives of others all over the world.





# Light Amid Darkness



## CARING MINISTRIES

“So, as those who have been chosen of God, holy and beloved, put on a heart of compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness and patience.” *Colossians 3:12*

What is Caring Ministries? It's a question that I get quite often. The biggest responsibility, is that I love on you. I love on all people in our congregation, love them in times of sadness, and pain — love them in joy and success. Hold their hand when they are scared or lonely, and try to spread some of God's love. It is a gift, a lovely way to “minister” to people and provide a

sense of connection in times that it may feel there is none. I am also immensely proud of The Friendly Visitors group that I have the pleasure of working with. A group of parishioners that are matched up with others that benefit from visits and fellowship, connecting with each other. If you or anyone you know needs a visit or may want to be a Friendly Visitor please contact me.

PAIGE GOOD, CALVARY'S CARING MINISTER

## RISTVEDT FAMILY

On August 26th, after an accident, our little girl was flown to Children's Hospital, where a skull fracture and concussion was confirmed. We, as parents, want to protect our children. Needless to say, we went through so many emotions. We were so thankful to God for protecting her, yet fear would set in thinking about the “what if.” I am still amazed at the community and support Calvary provided in a crisis. We were comforted knowing that prayers were covering Sophie. Friends watched our two boys so we could be with her in the hospital. When she was having a difficult time starting school with restrictions, our Church friends came together and brought her activities to keep her mind off of not being in gym or recess. Jesus' love and light shone bright in a scary time. We are forever grateful.

ERIC & DEB RISTVEDT



## SHEDDING LIGHT ON OUR CHURCH BUILDING

Calvary is busting at the seams! Because of this, the congregation commissioned the Building Exploration Team to spend the year studying our building and grounds, deferred maintenance, trends, and present and future needs. Our work has included hours of conversations, visits to other churches, reflection and study. In October, we signed a short-term exploration contract with architect Dan Miller of JLG in Alexandria to assist in planning and study.

In January, the congregation is invited to attend conversational forums on January 7 and 14, in anticipation of our Annual Congregational Meeting on January 21 between services. At that time, the BET and Church Council will seek approval to:

1. Contract with an architect for long-term services for the entirety of the project.
2. Assemble a Build Team to come up with plans, drawings and associated costs.





### *Christmas Eve Worship Services*

Saturday, December 23 - 6:00pm

Sunday, Dec. 24 - 11am (family) 1pm, 3pm (contemporary)

5pm, 7pm (traditional) *\*All candlelight services*

## JOIN US FOR WORSHIP

**Saturday:** 6pm Praise Worship

**Sunday:** 8:30am Traditional Worship

10:45am Celebrate Worship

**Wednesday:** 6:15pm Worship on Wednesday

[JOIN THE CONVERSATION AT CALVARY!](#)



/calvarylutheranchurchalex



@CalvaryAl



/CalvaryAlexandria

Download the CQ magazine at  
[www.calvaryalex.org](http://www.calvaryalex.org)



605 DOUGLAS STREET  
ALEXANDRIA, MINNESOTA 56308  
[www.calvaryalex.org](http://www.calvaryalex.org)

NON-PROFIT ORGANIZATION  
U.S. POSTAGE PAID  
PERMIT NO. 1  
ALEXANDRIA, MN 56308